

What Is Philosophy for Nietzsche? An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in the Department of  
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2014

ABSTRACT

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## Abstract

This paper intends to examine the nature of Nietzsche's philosophy of the future through a careful textual reading of *Beyond Good and Evil*, a work that was written in his mature period. The question is situated in the context of three competing understandings of Nietzsche's philosophy, the postmodernist understanding, the traditionalist understanding and the political understanding, and focuses on how Nietzsche is able to overcome the nihilistic tendencies inherent in his doctrine of the will to power, which is a substitute for metaphysics. The conclusion is that Nietzsche's vision of a philosophy of the future is not a system of doctrines, but is embodied in the life and soul of the philosopher of the future. Thus a philosophy of the future in Nietzschean sense would essentially be a contemplation of the highest or noblest type of soul, which is precisely what *Beyond Good and Evil* is concerned with.

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## List of Abbreviations

Nietzsche's Works

AC The Antichrist

BGE Beyond Good and Evil

EH Ecce Homo

GM The Genealogy of Morals

TI Twilight of Idols

Z Zarathustra

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to all the professors that I have taken class and worked with at the Department of Political Science at Duke. They are Professor Michael Allen Gillespie, Professor Thomas Spragens, Professor Ruth Grant and Professor Alexander Kirshner. Their classes and their kind help have made my two years at Duke a most inspiring and rewarding experience.

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# 1. Introduction

Is Nietzsche a philosopher? This question, which might have caused considerable altercations in the past, now requires almost no further defense.<sup>1</sup> Elevated to the status of a stellar thinker of the modern times, Nietzsche enjoys much the same respect (if not admiration) and receives equally serious treatment as the other philosophers that have entered the Pantheon of the Western tradition of philosophy. But the indisputable nature of Nietzsche's status as a philosopher does not necessarily resolve a related problem: the nature of Nietzsche's philosophy. This problem is particularly important because Nietzsche is a self-conscious, openly acknowledged antagonist and vehement opponent of the Western philosophical tradition. While we can assume with a degree of certainty that other philosophers before Nietzsche are addressing a basically stable set of philosophical questions using similar or at least related modes of thinking and concepts, these assumptions must be used with great caution in the case of Nietzsche. Indeed, the radical and unconventional nature of Nietzsche's philosophy reaches its peak when one considers his consistent and enthusiastic attack on the notion of truth throughout his writings<sup>2</sup>, which is perhaps the

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<sup>1</sup> In his book *Nietzsche, Psychology and First Philosophy*, Robert Pippin tries to show that Nietzsche makes great attempts to replace metaphysics with what he calls psychology, thus in this way terminate "philosophy." I think this entails an unnecessarily narrow understanding of the concept of "philosophy."

<sup>2</sup> It is disputable whether Nietzsche changes his attitude towards the concept of "truth" throughout his career. A famous and insightful treatment of this problem is Maudemarie Clark's



single most important presupposition of Western philosophy. Thus, it is imperative that one has a firm grasp on the problem that what philosophy is for Nietzsche in order to understand the meanings of specific doctrines of his philosophy such as eternal recurrence and will to power. But on the other hand, this is also such a fundamental question that it is almost impossible to give a satisfactory answer to it if one is not adequately familiar with the whole corpus of Nietzsche's works. So this should be the question as the starting point of one's encounter with Nietzsche, as well as the mark of the culmination of one's understanding of Nietzsche. As a novice student of Nietzsche, I intend to use this paper to propose a preliminary answer to this fundamental question that may serve as a cornerstone for my future study, and hopefully adds to the current understandings of this problem. Now I will briefly introduce these current opinions and then explain why I choose *Beyond Good and Evil* as the main text to help me answer the question.

## **1.1 Current understandings**

Because of the fundamental nature of this problem, almost every interpretation that aims to give a comparatively comprehensive understanding of Nietzsche's

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book *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, where she argues that Nietzsche's attitude towards "truth" has changed from the initial rejection to acceptance in the later part of his career. But I think Nietzsche's attitude on truth remains largely skeptical and dismissive in his mature period. I will elaborate on this point in the following parts of this paper.

philosophy would necessarily touch upon it. Although it is impossible for me to include most of the vast secondary literature on Nietzsche, I have summarized from my limited experience three schools of different understandings.<sup>3</sup> Specific interpretations within each school may differ in details, sometimes quite significantly, but I think my categorization is sufficient to situate my answer in an intellectual context.

Perhaps the most popular understanding of the nature of Nietzschean philosophy is the post-modern understanding. Nietzsche is sometimes celebrated as the first post-modern philosopher because of his radical attack of modernity and the Enlightenment project. This line of interpretation tends to emphasize Nietzsche's rejection of the existence of truth or possibility of knowing it, and put great importance on his perspectivism. Thus, post-modernist thinkers tend to give greater attention to Nietzsche's methods and style of writing than his substantive claims. For example, Michel Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" examines brilliantly the nature of Nietzsche's method of genealogy and how this method itself reveals crucial insight into Nietzsche's vision of history. The traditional way of historical narration presupposes an "objective" observer who stands outside "time," while genealogy thoroughly rejects this vision to construct a kind of history that is "gray, meticulous, and patiently

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, I have to exclude Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche from my consideration, because his interpretation seems to me to pose no less difficulty than the works of Nietzsche. Because of the limit in time and energy, I am unable to study Heidegger enough to talk intelligently about him, and am unwilling to rely on secondary summaries of his ideas. This choice is made with the utmost respect for Heidegger's thought and the greatest regret.

documentary.”<sup>4</sup> The origin or beginning of something is no longer something fixed and knowable, but rather fluid and uncertain. Another example of the postmodern understanding of Nietzsche’s philosophy is Alexander Nehamas’s book *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, which endeavors to apply Nietzsche’s philosophy to his own writing, or to use the style of his writing to understand his philosophy.<sup>5</sup> He says that “Nietzsche’s positive thinking consists not so much in the specific ideas with which the individual chapters that follow are concerned (though it does certainly include such views) as, even more important, in the presentation, or exemplification, of a specific character, recognizably literary, who makes of these philosophical ideas a way of life that is uniquely his.”<sup>6</sup> This method I think is more clearly reflected in his reading of BGE, “Who is the Philosopher of the Future? A Reading of *Beyond Good and Evil*,” in which he reaches the conclusion that Nietzsche writes in aphoristic and disruptive manner in order to communicate effectively his perspectivism. His substantive arguments therefore are of secondary importance.<sup>7</sup>

The second school, which I would call the traditionalist school, compared with the postmodernist understanding, plays down to a reasonable extent Nietzsche’s break

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<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” pp. 76

<sup>5</sup> Nehamas thus thinks that Nietzsche adopts a kind of aestheticism, “the reliance upon artistic models to understand the world.” See Mark Tomlinson, “Nehamas’ Nietzsche,” *Interpreting Nietzsche*, pp. 199

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche, Life as Literature*, Harvard University Press, 1985, pp. 18

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Nehamas, “Who is the Philosopher of the Future? A Reading of *Beyond Good and Evil*,” in *Reading Nietzsche*, pp. 51

with the tradition and underscores more the affinity or continuity between Nietzsche's philosophical undertakings and his predecessors. In particular, these scholars question the Post-modernists ready acceptance of Nietzsche's rejection of truth and often argue in different ways how Nietzsche in fact still holds some notions of the truth or in the possibility of knowing the truth. Notable examples include Maudemarie Clark's two books, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* and *The Soul of Beyond Good and Evil*. In both books she (in the latter book with the co-author Dudrick) attempts to advance a neo-Kantian understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy, in which Nietzsche continues Kant's repudiation of the dogmatic metaphysics and develops a notion of truth that is similar to Kant's idea of "assigning truth to nature" but is more "naturalized."<sup>8</sup> This understanding entails a more thorough and serious treatment of the specific arguments Nietzsche makes and taking them to be serious philosophical arguments.<sup>9</sup> Similar approach belongs also to Kaufmann's rendering of Nietzsche, where he compares frequently Nietzsche with other philosophers. For example, Kaufmann compares Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power and self-overcoming with Hegel's phenomenology of the spirit and argues that Nietzsche's cosmology is similar to a kind of "dialectical monist."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pp. 121

<sup>9</sup> Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, *The Soul of Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 248

<sup>10</sup> Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, pp. 235

The third school I think is characterized by a “political” understanding of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Unlike the postmodernist understanding that denies Nietzsche has a single, unified vision of the world and the traditionalist school which focuses mainly on Nietzsche’s positions on epistemology and metaphysical questions, authors in this school rely heavily on the moral and political aspects on Nietzsche’s philosophy and hold these aspects to be the essence of it. A case in point is Tracy Strong’s book *Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, in which he argues that Nietzsche’s philosophy is fundamentally an effort to recover the kind of unity between philosophy and politics that was characteristic of pre-Socratic Greek society and was lost with the unfolding of the Socratic philosophy.<sup>11</sup> According to him, Nietzsche sympathizes with Socrates’ intention to “recover a foundation for morality” in an age of social disintegration, but he thinks the approach Socrates adopts, namely the dialectical questioning of moralities, is not only ineffective but actually disastrous.<sup>12</sup> Peter Berkowitz’s book *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist*, also exemplifies a moral or ethical understanding of Nietzsche.

Laurence Lampert is another figure notable for his political and moral understanding of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Under the influence of Leo Strauss, Lampert finds a kind of Platonic concern for the Good in Nietzsche’s two books of his mature period, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, and a hidden affinity between the thought of Leo

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<sup>11</sup> Tracy Strong, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, pp. 202

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp. 117-22

Strauss and Nietzsche. But despite their many similarities, Lampert also points to the fundamental conflict or disagreement between Nietzsche and Strauss, in that the former actively rejects the practice of Platonic noble lies that protect the political society and the opinions on which it is based from the radicalness of philosophical activity, while the latter insists that such practice should not be abandoned.<sup>13</sup>

All three schools of interpretation reveal important aspects of the nature of Nietzsche's philosophy by emphasizing different elements of it. In this paper, I will adopt the third approach. In other words, I also think that the Nietzschean philosophy can be best understood as a unique type of moral or political philosophy. Unlike traditional type of moral or political philosophy, Nietzsche does not devise a unified, coherent, (hence perhaps dogmatic) theory of the Good. But he is also far from the contemporary political philosophers, particularly liberal thinkers like John Rawls, who refrain completely from the discussion about problems of the Good. I intend to show, through a careful reading of *Beyond Good and Evil* with reference to other works written in his mature period (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of Idols*, *Antichrist*, *Ecce Homo*)<sup>14</sup>, that Nietzsche envisions a "philosophy of the future" that continues the great tradition of Western philosophy, but also manages to resist the

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<sup>13</sup> Laurence Lampert, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*, pp. 169

<sup>14</sup> Southwell thinks that "*The Will to Power* begins with BGE and contains all Nietzsche's publications from there on, up to and including the *Antichrist*." Gareth Southwell, *A Beginner's Guide to Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 14

temptation to relapse into the dogmatism characteristic of previous philosophies. When advancing my own thesis, I will make specific critique or objections to interpretations furnished by the other schools.

## **1.2 Methodology: Why *Beyond Good and Evil*?**

Since my goal is to provide my answer to the question, what philosophy is for Nietzsche, it is necessary for me to make the case why I chose to focus on *Beyond Good and Evil* instead of Nietzsche's other works. The reasons are as follows.

First, the nature and theme of BGE is such that it can be regarded as a relatively complete statement of Nietzsche's mature philosophy<sup>15</sup>. It is generally accepted that Nietzsche's works and thought can be divided into three periods<sup>16</sup>: the early period of *Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and *Untimely Meditations* (1873-75); the middle period of *Human, All Too Human* (1878-80), *The Gay Science* (1882) and *Daybreak* (1881); and the later period of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1884), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), and several other published works.<sup>17</sup> Although there has been much debate about the unity and changes of these

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<sup>15</sup> As Acamora and Ansell-Pearson point out, BGE "takes up virtually every theme he treats in later writings and presents them in unified writings." *Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil: A Reader's Guide*, pp. 6

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Eric Voegelin, "Nietzsche and Pascal," in *The New Order and Last Orientation, History of Political Idea, Vol. VII, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 25*, Juergen Gebhardt ed., University of Missouri Press, pp. 251

<sup>17</sup> For a brief chronology of Nietzsche's life and works, see Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, pp. xiv-xix

three periods<sup>18</sup>, it is generally accepted that the works of his third period represents the mature expression of Nietzsche's philosophy. Indeed, in a letter Nietzsche wrote to his friend Jacob Burckhardt, he says that BGE "says the same things as my Zarathustra, but differently, very differently."<sup>19</sup> In EH, Nietzsche says that Z belongs to the Yes-saying part, and from BGE on, he starts his No-saying part of his works and initiates a campaign to "reevaluate all the values so far." (EH) BGE is thus a mature and developed expression of how Nietzsche envisions his task and how he should carry it out. Its subtitle, "Prelude to A Philosophy of the Future," also indicates that philosophy is a central concern of this book.<sup>20</sup> Compared with Z, which is full of allegories, metaphors and symbols, and with the three books of his middle period, which are more aphoristic and less organized, BGE is much less difficult to grasp. And I think it is perhaps easier to understand Nietzsche's view on philosophy given what he *rejects* in traditional philosophy, which is more thoroughly addressed in BGE.

Second, this choice is also influenced by Leo Strauss, who wrote his only essay that is devoted entirely to Nietzsche on BGE and made it the central piece of his anthology *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*. He also gave a series of lectures on this

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<sup>18</sup> For example, Paul Franco argues in his *Nietzsche's Enlightenment: The Free-Spirit Trilogy of the Middle Period* that contrary to the common view, the third period actually bears much affinity to the middle period and there is more continuity than disruption between the two periods. See, pp. 162

<sup>19</sup> Michael Tanner, "Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil," in *Philosophers ancient and modern*, pp. 201

<sup>20</sup> "Philosophy is surely the primary theme of Beyond Good and Evil." Leo Strauss, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil," *Studies in Platonic Philosophy*, pp. 176



book at St. Johns College the year before he died.<sup>21</sup> His meticulous reading of BGE provides illuminating insight into the nature of Nietzsche's philosophy, but it is itself written in a manner that requires careful reading and thinking. With the help of this interpretation and comparing it with other interpretations, one might gain a deeper and more complete understanding of the book as a whole.

Third, although I think BGE forms a unified whole that best expresses Nietzsche's understanding of philosophy, I find a satisfactory articulation of that vision is lacking in current literature. Not many books or essays address specifically BGE<sup>22</sup>, and most books take the form of commentary that is useful in understanding specific meanings of individual aphorisms, but still lacking in a coherent account of the book's argument.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Nehamas thinks that for BGE there is the serious structural problem that "we simply do not understand its structure, its narrative line. Indeed, we do not even know whether it has any narrative line at all."<sup>24</sup> This paper intends to contribute to such a kind of reading. In light of this intention, I plan to proceed following the order of

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<sup>21</sup> A partial list of recordings of these lectures can be found on the website of the Leo Strauss Center at the University of Chicago.

<sup>22</sup> For a list of books and articles on BGE, see Christa Acampora and Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil: A Reader's Guide*, pp.

<sup>23</sup> Berkowitz notices that only Strauss and Nehamas have written essays regarding the whole of BGE. See, Paul Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist*, pp. 230

<sup>24</sup> Nehamas, "Who is the Philosopher of the future?" *Reading Nietzsche*, pp. 46

Nietzsche's presentation of his thought and hope to uncover the "lucid and necessary order"<sup>25</sup> of the seemingly disconnected aphorisms.

### **1.3 Thesis**

So, what is my final answer to the question I propose in the title of the paper? What is Nietzsche's vision of "a philosophy of the future" like? I have already said that I fundamentally agree with Tracy Strong, Laurence Lampert, Peter Berkowitz (perhaps also Leo Strauss) that Nietzsche's philosophy is best understood as a unique type of political or moral philosophy. But I would frame the difference between this philosophy and Nietzsche's from a novel perspective. The first three chapters of BGE are an attempt to explain a grave error that has characterized Western thought since Plato, which is the belief in the opposite origins of values. (BGE, 2) Previous political or moral philosophers presuppose the existence of truth/eternal unchanging order/the Good/God as such, and make them the *opposite* of everything human and in this world. So long as the belief in the former still holds and is genuine, human beings are able to maintain order within themselves and in the community, and thus can survive and thrive even in the face of endless suffering. But the disastrous consequences of this type of moral or political philosophy are only manifest when the belief in the existence of conceptual distinctions such as truth/eternal unchanging order/God starts to crumble. God is dead, but the

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<sup>25</sup> Leo Strauss, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," *Studies in Platonic Philosophy*, pp. 177

nihilistic values continue to dominate people's moral imagination in the so-called "modern ideas," now without the restraining, order-giving power of the faith in God. This gives rise to ideological trends like positivism, liberalism, socialism and feminism, which for Nietzsche are all manifestations of the anarchist tendency of the nihilistic values.

This is Nietzsche's diagnosis of the moral and political situation of his time, a result of the development of a particular type of philosophy. Nietzsche calls it "a dogmatist's error – namely, Plato's invention of the pure spirit and the good as such." (BGE, Preface) But Nietzsche is certainly not a conservative in the usual sense. He regards the demise of Platonism both as an unprecedented crisis *and* an opportunity for the rejuvenation of philosophy after two millennia, namely the unique opportunity to correct the error committed two thousand years ago. Nietzsche frequently refers to himself and his potential allies as "we good Europeans and free, *very* free spirits," (BGE, Preface), who are the predecessors of the philosophers of the future. Their task, which Nietzsche calls "*wakefulness itself*," is first to ward off any resurgence of Platonic or dogmatic philosophy (which entails a critique of modernity), and then to envision and prepare for a kind of philosophy freed from "the prejudices of the philosophers."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Leo Strauss, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," *Studies in Platonic Philosophy*, pp. 175

Instead Nietzsche proposes the doctrine of the will to power and makes it the *sole* origin of both good and evil in this world. Thus for Nietzsche, opposite values actually have the same origin and they cannot exist alone. So any moral or value judgment should not be a sharp dichotomy between good and evil, but must be a spectrum of different shades of color. In other words, it will consist of “perspectives,” not on an equal plane but in an order of rank from low to high. Philosophizing thus is like a contest for those courageous mountain-climbers: only those with the greatest strength, health, perseverance and solitude can reach the peak or the near peak, attaining a more holistic vision of the whole world and human life than seen from the lower rungs of the ladder. Seeing from the height down on the human life, instead of looking upward from the human life to the other world, the philosopher would eventually be cured of his rancor against the human life and continue his philosophizing with genuine laughter. This philosophy is political or moral in the sense that it is thoroughly faithful to and based on the human life, yet it is also able to provide a perspective that is beyond it, because it is the most holistic or highest view. Thus it provides a genuine basis for the genuine peaceful yet dynamic coexistence of the competing drives in the soul/in a state.

The central problem in understanding the nature of Nietzsche’s philosophy, perhaps also the central difficulty, is to understand his double rejection of both the traditional metaphysical philosophy/religion and the modern positivist/nihilist

thinking.<sup>27</sup> What further confounds the problem is the fact that Nietzsche actually derives much nourishment from both schools. That is the reason why the other two interpretative schools I have mentioned above seem to hold that Nietzsche in fact is not very different from either of them. I would instead propose the following interpretation: Nietzsche's notion of truth is fundamentally different from all previous philosophies and religions because his truth is not any system of doctrines about what is good, but lies in the nature of the philosopher himself. The philosopher *is* the truth. So the question "what is philosophy" is equivalent to "who is the philosopher" for Nietzsche. The world viewed from inside is "the will to power," and philosophy is the most spiritual will to power. It is in the philosopher's will to power that the world that concerns us takes shape, since he creates values and gives orders. Thus philosophy is fundamentally political philosophy because philosopher is the secret commander and legislator of the world, and the task of philosophy is none other than to command and legislate. The philosopher as the truth cannot be reduced to or limited by any written words and doctrines or systems of values, although he must give orders and forms in such words and doctrines. The philosopher as the truth is the embodiment of both

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<sup>27</sup> In the Preface of BGE, Nietzsche mentions the Jesuits and the democratic movement as two solutions to the current spiritual crisis in Europe. I think the Jesuits represent the conservative effort, while the democratic movement belongs to the latter, more modern effort. At the end of the Preface Nietzsche clearly rejects both efforts by stating "we who are neither Jesuits nor democrats." (BGE, Preface) See also, Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 14, where he defines Jesuitism as "a Christian exercise in Platonic noble lying."

Apollonian and Dionysian forces: he himself is the profound abyss that contains the most spiritual and strongest will to power that fundamentally affirms *this* world, and he also has the artfulness and resourcefulness to give forms to the fundamental chaos of the world, which provide essential conditions for the life of human beings in this world. Although these forms and doctrines are for the ordinary human beings real commandments and orders (“thou shalt”), they cannot be chains for the philosopher, since they are fundamentally products of his will to power (“I will”). As the truth itself, the philosopher is the origin of contradictory values. Although suffering occasionally from this tension, he is still able to live a most joyful and productive life that gives meaning to the rest of human beings.

Thus it seems fair to agree with Michael A. Gillespie’s contention that Nietzsche marks the completion of modern nihilism that tries to make man like God.<sup>28</sup> The philosopher in Nietzsche’s understanding is indeed very much like the Christian God. But there are two things that speak against this accusation of nihilism on the part of Nietzsche. The first is the fact that Nietzsche does not think just anyone can be philosopher. Nietzsche argues precisely that only very few people can attain the freedom and independence of a philosopher and thus can command and legislate. In fact you have to be *born* and *predestined* to carry out such a task and bear such a burden. Thus for ordinary people, their life should always be governed by systems of values and

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<sup>28</sup> Michael A. Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, pp. 255

laws that cannot be nihilistic. In fact, Nietzsche argues precisely that ordinary people cannot live without these values. The second is that the philosopher in Nietzsche's sense upholds values and an understanding of life that is fundamentally different from what the Christian God represents. Unlike the Christian God who is not a part of *this* world, and hence symbolizes a profound *ressentiment* against life on earth, Nietzsche's philosopher fundamentally affirms life on earth.<sup>29</sup> In particular, because he realizes the fundamental interdependence of both good and evil, and thus is at the same time more courageous to take risks as well as being more cautious in doing good. Nietzsche's philosopher endeavors to produce human beings that are profoundly different from those disciplined by Christian moralities. Indeed, just as Vattimo points out, "both the subject as knowing and the subject as willing belong to the metaphysical tradition from which Nietzsche wishes to escape, which he wishes to demolish."<sup>30</sup> As I will demonstrate in this paper that the chasm between reason and will is precisely one thing that Nietzsche intends to bridge as he tries to correct the metaphysical error of Platonism.

But has this task been successfully carried out? Is Nietzsche's philosophy *merely* a preparation for "a philosophy of the future," which just delineate the task and goal but

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<sup>29</sup> For example, in AC, Nietzsche basically denies the values represented by the Christian God, not in favor of atheism in itself: "That we find no God – either in history or in nature or behind nature – is not what differentiates *us*, but that we experience what has been revered as God, not as 'godlike' but as miserable, as absurd, as harmful, not merely as an error but as *a crime against life*." (AC, 47)

<sup>30</sup> Vattimo, "Philosophy as Ontological Activity," in *Dialogue with Nietzsche*, pp. 69

not really an exemplar of the philosophy of the future? Or is it itself already “a philosophy of the future?”<sup>31</sup> The answer to this question I think is much more ambiguous, and this ambiguity actually touches upon an essential feature of Nietzsche’s philosophy: it is a *Versuch*, both an experiment and a temptation that lure strong and courageous souls onto the odyssey of spirituality,<sup>32</sup> a journey most difficult and dangerous, yet full of possibilities.

Thus, I think Nietzsche’s philosophy is fundamentally political philosophy because it is a philosophy about man, about how and who can live the best and highest as a human being. It is an effort to break through the “vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*” (BGE, 230) and to uphold and praise an ideal of a philosophical life (or a philosopher) that is in Nietzsche’s sense most natural and truest. Nietzsche endeavors to rescue philosophy from dogmatism and vulgarization, to recover its status as a way of living, not just in the outer behavior and speech but most importantly in the soul, in the active and dynamic tension and harmony of the conflicting forces in the soul, just as in the nature.

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<sup>31</sup> This is a problem repeatedly encountered by readers of BGE, see Nehamas, “Who is the Philosopher of the Future: A Reading of *Beyond Good and Evil*”, pp. 55

<sup>32</sup> Leo Strauss, “Note on the Plan of Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*,” *Studies in Platonic Philosophy*, pp. 179



The whole book of BGE can be divided into two parts by the fourth chapter of “Epigrams and Interludes.” On surface, it is clear that the first part is on philosophy and religion while the second part is on morality and politics.<sup>33</sup> But since the whole book is concerned with philosophy (as “a prelude to a philosophy of the future”), it can be misleading to divide the book in such a thematic way. I agree that the fourth chapter indeed marks a partition, but the first three chapters Nietzsche is more concerned with a critical engagement with the traditional metaphysical philosophy/religion, particularly to analyze the error of metaphysics and to propose his understanding of the world as will to power. The last five chapters are trying to delineate what the new philosophy/philosopher of the future should be like with the hypothesis of the will to power. Since different philosophies/philosophers are fundamentally determined by different dominant drives of the soul, the central problem of the second part of the book is an examination of different types of soul in order to understand the highest and noblest type, that of the philosopher. The new values and new tasks the new philosophy sets for itself emerge with this critique and finally culminate in the celebration of Dionysus in the final chapter.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp. 176

## 2. First Part: Dogmatism and the Will to Power

In the Preface of BGE Nietzsche's ambiguous attitude towards the philosophical tradition is quite manifest. Ambiguity means both negative and positive assessment. And one might notice the difference in tone between BGE and GM in its critique of the tradition: while GM is marked by much emotion-charged disparagement<sup>1</sup>, BGE's criticism is less harsh and is more characterized by humorous parody and mockery. Nietzsche characterizes the whole tradition of dogmatism as "a noble childishness and tyronism." (BGE, Preface) On the one hand, it has led to the achievement of very many great things on the earth and produced values that are able to "inscribe themselves in the hearts of humanity with eternal demands." (BGE, Preface) On the other hand, it is fundamentally based on the "most dangerous of all errors." But after all it seems that Nietzsche is not totally aversive to dangers; on the contrary, he might welcome dangers wholeheartedly. (BGE, 23) What on earth does Nietzsche think the past philosophies get wrong and what is laudable about them? Let us read carefully the first three chapters.

### 2.1 "The Religious Interpretation of Existence"

The first aphorism of the whole book throws out a striking problem that Nietzsche claims "had never even been put so far." (BGE, 1) That is, the cause and value of the will to truth. Nietzsche asks, "why not rather untruth?" Indeed, in the following

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<sup>1</sup> That does not mean GM doesn't include substantial passages on the greatness of the tradition.

Nietzsche makes a strong case for the preference of “untruth” over “truth.” Does this mean that Nietzsche actually prefers untruth to truth? I intend to demonstrate in this part that Nietzsche regards that the “will to truth” characteristic of the metaphysical tradition of philosophy and religion, the dogmatic pursuit of eternal and universal truth, as a fundamentally “will to untruth.”<sup>2</sup> This “will to untruth” is necessary for life and has produced many great things in the world. But nonetheless, it is still based on untruth and therefore can go dangerously astray. Nietzsche’s goal thus is to find a genuine and healthier will to truth that characterizes the free spirit and the philosophers of the future. Nietzsche has no intent to extirpate untruth or will to untruth altogether from the world (he sees perhaps more than anyone else the value of it), but he urges and even “lures” those chosen few to get on the most dangerous and difficult journey of exploring the “truth.”

Why does Nietzsche think that previous philosophers’ will to truth is actually “will to untruth”? For Nietzsche all philosophies in the past are no more than the rationalization or systemization of philosophers’ own moral prejudice or instinct instead of the so-called “drive to knowledge” (BGE, 6): “It always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise, philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most

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<sup>2</sup> Clark and Dudrick names coins the phrase “will to value” to express similar idea as my “will to untruth.” But they think that “will to value” and “will to truth” are two aspects of the will of those philosophers, while I think what Nietzsche is trying to express, is not that the philosophers have two separate parts of their will, but that they are not honest enough to realize or admit that their will to truth is not genuine. See, Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 47

spiritual will to power, to the 'creation of the world,' to the *causa prima*." (BGE, 9)<sup>3</sup>

Nietzsche jokes about this by quoting a Latin saying: at the end of the day the fundamental conviction of the philosopher would "appears on the stage" and turn out to be a most beautiful and stubborn ass. (BGE, 8) Those philosophers who are not aware of the existence or the fundamental effect of "this ass" are characterized by childishness and moral naivety, such as Kant and Schopenhauer, who belong to the "innocent, rich and still youthful period of the German spirit." (BGE, 11) The Stoics are also such self-deceivers. (BGE, 9) But there are also philosophers who deliberately "act" in such a manner. For example, Plato and the Platonists are called "Dionysiokolakes" by Epicurus who accuses them that "they are all *actors*, there is nothing genuine about them." (BGE, 7) They are not truly naïve; but they act or talk like other naïve philosophers.

What is the root of this universal naivety/dishonesty? As Nietzsche put it, why are "synthetic judgments a priori" necessary? (BGE, 4) Nietzsche thinks that the root of the naivety lies in some kind of "instincts" or "physiological demands", for he thinks that even if philosophy is "conscious thinking" it is still much the result of one's instincts. In other words, it is "life" itself that demands it: Untruth is a condition of life, a

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<sup>3</sup> Vattimo also points out that "what we believe to be truth, the structure of being in itself, is nothing more than the ideological projection of a certain form of life – whether of individuals or societies." Gianni Vattimo, "The Two Senses of Nihilism in Nietzsche," *Dialogue with Nietzsche*, pp. 136

condition for the survival and thriving of life. (BGE, 4) Indeed, "simplification and falsification" of reality are crucial for life. (BGE, 24)

The most subtle, powerful, and extreme form of "simplification and falsification" is perhaps religion. For Nietzsche, philosophy in the past is fundamentally identical with religion in structure because both are systematized doctrines of some kind of basic drive or drives in the soul to create the world in its own image, thus falsifying it in order to enjoy/endure life. It is even more tyrannical than philosophy because the simple command of "belief" excludes all other competing drives: it requires in Pascal's case "a continual suicide of reason." (BGE, 46) And monotheism is certainly more tyrannical and monstrous than polytheism, but it also exhibits the greatest power: the Old Testament, which "invents" the holy God, possesses "so grand a style" that Greek and India literature cannot compare. (BGE, 52) Even the world's most powerful people felt the need to "bow to the saint" because in the saint "they sensed a new power, a strange, as yet unconquered enemy." (BGE, 51)

But in all these demonstrations of grandiose power Nietzsche senses most astutely the greatest weakness: the fear of truth. Precisely because they stick so desperately to their "truth," they turn their back on what is "behind" or "beneath" that "truth," hence refuse to confront "the whole truth." Nietzsche acknowledges the profound wisdom contained in this attachment to "the surface" and "the superficiality," for the reckless plunging "beneath the surface" has led to "disastrous results." And this

will to untruth, this “cult of surfaces,” created by philosophers and artists, and most of all *homines religiosi*, has promoted human beings to achieve great things on the earth.

(BGE, 59; Preface) He is neither unaware of nor ungrateful to that. But he knew that this is not without problem:

*“It is the profound, suspicious fear of an incurable pessimism that forces whole millennia to bury their teeth in and cling to a religious interpretation of existence: the fear of that instinct which senses that one might get a hold of the truth too soon, before man has become strong enough, hard enough, artist enough.” (BGE, 59)*

Thus, for Nietzsche, philosophies and religions before him, namely Platonism and Christianity (which is Platonism for the people), are fundamentally “religious interpretation of existence.” However systematized and rationalized they may be, they are still at the bottom based on instincts, not consciousness (BGE, 3), based on the instinctive attachment to human life, not on reason (BGE, 24; 39; 46).<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche denies the simple equation or correlation between truth and good human life: “when a human being is too human about it – ‘he seeks the true only to do the good.’ – I bet he finds nothing.” (BGE, 35); or between truth and happiness: “Happiness and virtue are no arguments.... Something might be true while being harmful and dangerous in the highest degree.” (BGE, 39) Truth is not lovable; it is most terrible. Hence those “truths”

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<sup>4</sup> Similarly in AC, Nietzsche argues that philosophers of the past are fundamentally a “priestly type:” “When we consider that the philosopher is merely the next development of the priestly type, then this legacy of the priest, this self-deceiving counterfeit, ceases to be surprising.” (AC, 12)

that are pleasant and beautiful cannot be the product of will to truth, but only will to untruth.

Now this “religious interpretation of existence” has started to crumble. Why? Because human beings have gradually grown up. They are starting to get rid of their childishness. (cf. BGE, 5, 34, 57) Paradoxically, once they cannot genuinely believe in their own “truth,” their “truth” ceases to have a life-promoting force.<sup>5</sup> Now nihilism and pessimism threatens to take over Europe. Before we look more closely into Nietzsche’s solution, let us go back a step and examine the understanding of truth that have dominated the thinking of Europe for two millennia and what Nietzsche holds should be the correct understanding of truth.

## ***2.2 The Error of the Past Philosophers and the “Truth” of Nietzsche***

In the previous part I have argued that Nietzsche holds that the past philosophers’ and religion’s will to truth is actually will to untruth. In this part, I want explain further why Nietzsche thinks that this error is due to the philosophers’ human, all too human instincts, which make them blind to the ultimate motivation for their creative philosophizing. In other words, they are decisively lacking in self-knowledge.

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<sup>5</sup> Strauss says that “God died” does not merely mean “men have ceased to believe in God.” But it means that “even while God lived he never was what the believers in him thought him to be, namely, deathless. Theism as it understood itself was therefore always wrong. Yet for a time it was true, i.e., powerful, life-giving.” Leo Strauss, “Note on the Plan of Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*,” *Studies in Platonic Philosophy*, pp. 179

This is why Nietzsche thinks they are childish or naïve, albeit great. By critiquing the philosophers' of the past, Nietzsche is able to envision a different kind of understanding of truth and therewith a new type of will to truth. This new type of will to truth must acquire the self-knowledge that this will to truth is fundamentally a manifestation of the will to power and it is inextricably linked to the will to untruth.<sup>6</sup>

The beginning of aphorism 2 explains what Nietzsche thinks is the "typical prejudgment and prejudice" of "the metaphysicians of all ages." "The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in opposite values*:"

*"[T]he things of the highest value must have another, peculiar origin – they cannot be derived from this transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world, from this turmoil of delusion and lust. Rather from the lap of Being, the intransitory, the hidden god, the "thing-in-itself" – there must be their basis, and nowhere else." (BGE, 2)*

Nietzsche disputes this faith by proposing two possibilities: first, it is possible that there are no opposites at all; second, the valuations and opposite values of past metaphysicians are "merely foreground estimates," "a higher and more fundamental value for life might have to be ascribed to deception, selfishness, and lust." (BGE, 2) In the next aphorism he mentions again "foreground estimates:"

*"Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life.....such estimates might be, in spite of their regulative importance for us, nevertheless mere foreground estimates, a certain kind of niaiserie which may be*

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<sup>6</sup> Tracy Strong points out that will to power in German is "Wille zur Macht," Macht is related to machen which means "to make." So will to power is essentially related to creation, production or fabrication. Tracy Strong, *Nietzsche and the Politics of transfiguration*, pp. 219



*necessary for the preservation of just such beings as we are. Supposing, that is, that not just man is the 'measure of things.'*" – (BGE, 3)

Thus, the last sentence of the paragraph reminds us that the metaphysical faith in the opposite values and peculiar origin of the Good is actually the result of anthropocentrism.<sup>7</sup> We human beings, in order to survive, starting from ourselves, have invented "truths" and therefore "untruth."<sup>8</sup> This is manifest in a lot of the prejudices of philosophers of the past.

For Nietzsche, materialism (or sensualism) and idealism alike are both the result of unreflected, instinctive belief in ourselves. Both are fundamentally anthropocentric. The central aphorism of the first chapter deals with one of the central assumptions of the philosophy of the past: atomism. Nietzsche thinks that material atomism actually comes from the credulous trust in senses: "Boscovich has taught us to abjure the belief in the last part of the earth that 'stood fast...it is the greatest triumph over the senses that has been gained on earth so far.'" (BGE, 12) But he immediately warns us that another type of atomism, the "soul atomism" is yet to be overcome, namely "the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an atomon." This is what "Christianity has taught best and longest." (BGE, 12) Nietzsche thinks that the whole modern

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<sup>7</sup> Clark and Dubrick argue that Nietzsche, like Kant, thinks that the great error of the metaphysicians is their uncritical faith in the capacity of natural reason to know the truth. I've elaborated on this view in the previous section, but I think the most important point is the faith in the different origins of opposite values. See, Maudemarie Clark and David Dubrick, *The Soul of Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 24

<sup>8</sup> Leo Strauss, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," *Studies in Platonic Philosophy*, pp. 177

philosophy is just such an attempt to “assassinate the old soul concept, under the guise of a critique of the subject-and-predicate concept.” (BGE, 54) Nietzsche continues to carry out this attempt and finally radicalizes it by drawing its final conclusion.

The “soul atomism” is inextricably related to many of the important concepts in metaphysics, such as “immediate certainty,” “ego,” “free will,” “cause and effect,” which Nietzsche makes a detailed critique in the first chapter. The basic idea of Nietzsche’s criticism is that when we describe a thing that happens, the grammatical habit requires the supposition of a subject as the “cause” of what has happened. But in reality, it is only one type of interpretation of the process. There is another possibility that no such temporally stable and identical subject exists. What has happened just happens without having any single prior cause that necessarily leads to it. (BGE, 17, 21, 54) In other words, Nietzsche would rather talk about “process” than about “substance.” He thinks that “substance” is only a kind of useful fiction and grammatical assumption (BGE, 20), but the reality is the constantly changing flux that consists of nothing but forces in all directions.<sup>9</sup> For Nietzsche, this kind of trust in the unity and singularity of substance is also a kind of “popular prejudice.” He is not refuting it by arguing that it is wrong or false, but he is profoundly dissatisfied by the philosophers’ uncritical adoption

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<sup>9</sup> This understanding of reality, not in terms of substance but in terms of forces, is also characteristic of the modern physics. See, Gareth Southwell, *A Beginner’s Guide to Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 116

of such popular prejudices. So at the end of the day, they are still “human, all too human.” (BGE, 19)<sup>10</sup>

So Nietzsche’s alternative to “soul atomism” is his doctrine of the will to power. I think for Nietzsche, the chief merit of this doctrine is that it is much less anthropocentric than all the other metaphysical assumptions. Human beings can be understood in the same terms as all the other phenomena in nature. In the first part, Nietzsche explains the will to power mainly in aphorism 19 and 36. In these two aphorisms Nietzsche endeavors to devise a theory that serves as a foundational assumption for the interpretations of both natural phenomena and human life.

Nietzsche first explains his understanding of the phenomenon of willing. First, he thinks that willing is not a unity but a complex mixture of different sensations and thoughts. Second, he holds that willing is “above all an *affect*, and specifically the affect of the command.” Every act of willing renders something in us obedient. Thus, in an act of willing there are always a duality in us, the commanding part and the obedient part. By identifying ourselves with the commanding part, we enjoy “an increase of the sensation of power.” But this is at the expense of ignoring the duality of willing. By comparing our body to “a social structure composed of many souls,” Nietzsche actually

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<sup>10</sup> See also, Tracy Strong, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, pp. 50

claims that every act of willing is a political act, “a question of commanding and obeying.” (BGE, 19)<sup>11</sup>

Here we can see that Nietzsche understands will chiefly in terms of willing, as a process of commanding and obeying, rather than any fixed or relatively stable substance. What is “given” is merely the drives in us, which are nothing but random forces that exist in nature. (BGE, 36) Hence, Nietzsche’s doctrine of will to power is different from that of Hobbes, in that even though for Hobbes the pursuit of power is ceaseless, power is chiefly a tool to acquire happiness. But for Nietzsche, the meaning of power is in its exercising itself.<sup>12</sup> Power is power only when you exercise it, when you discharge it. (BGE, 13) Understood in this light, will to power can apply to explain everything in nature, even the mechanistic world. All these movements, functions and activities are the results of discharging the enormous power in the world. The only problem, is whether you want to “explain the world” at all.<sup>13</sup> For Nietzsche, “to explain” means to posit causality, and to posit causality we have to recognize “the will as *efficient*.” (BGE, 36) For example, a stone falls on the ground because the will to power in

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<sup>11</sup> Haar also explains that the will to power “possesses a fundamental reflexivity, it always overcomes itself, through action or reaction. At its origin it presents itself to itself as a chaotic and contradictory diversity of elementary impulses.” Haar, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, pp. 9

<sup>12</sup> See also, Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, pp. 360

<sup>13</sup> This can be compared with a passage in Z, “Indeed, this ego and the ego’s contradiction and confusion still speak most honestly of its being – this creating, willing, valuing ego, which is the measure and value of things.” (Z, “On the afterworldly”); Also in AC, “Life itself is to my mind the instinct for growth, for durability, for an accumulation of forces, for *power*: where the will to power is lacking there is decline.” (AC, First Book, 6)

it dictates that it discharge its power of gravity. But when a man throws it up in the air, the will of the man discharging his power is *stronger* than the stone's tendency to discharge its power ("will to power"). Nietzsche thinks that "cause and effect," if at all, can only be understood in terms of strong and weak wills.

*It is we alone who have devised cause, sequence, for-each-other, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we project and mix this symbol world into things as if it existed "in itself," we act once more as we have always acted – mythologically. The "unfree will" is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of strong and weak wills. (BGE, 21)*

Thus, for Nietzsche, the world in itself has no order or law at all; it is simply a constant flux of powers.<sup>14</sup> But if we *have* to make sense of it, namely positing causality onto it, the *minimum* we can do is to understand it in terms of the will to power.<sup>15</sup> So in aphorism 36, Nietzsche says that the application of the doctrine of will to power to the whole world is demanded by "the conscience of *method*." But nonetheless, Nietzsche

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<sup>14</sup> Clark argues in her book *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* that Nietzsche in his later work abandons the view that previous philosophies falsified the reality, since he rejects the existence of a true world or thing-in-itself. (Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pp. 117) But I think at least judging from BGE, the doctrine of the will to power still claims to be an interpretation of nature and Nietzsche still holds onto *homo natura*. I think the more plausible contention is that Nietzsche denies the metaphysics of fixed and unchanging substance but still presupposes a world, a substratum that contains chaotic powers and forces.

<sup>15</sup> A similar passage in Z says explicitly that a will to truth is "a will to the thinkability of all beings... You want to make all being thinkable, for you doubt with well-founded suspicion that it is already thinkable. But it shall yield and bend for you. Thus your will wants it... That is your whole will, you who are wisest: a will to power – when you speak of good and evil too, and of valuations. You still want to create the world before which you can kneel: that is your ultimate hope and intoxication." (Z, "On self-overcoming")

does not claim it is the truth. The most he says is that “we have to make the experiment of positing the causality of the will hypothetically as the only one.” (BGE, 36)<sup>16</sup>

Now it is clear that what Nietzsche fundamentally opposes to the teachings of the metaphysicians. As we can see from the first paragraph of aphorism 2, their “error” is not so much the faith in the opposite values, as in the opposite *origins* of the opposite values: they insist that the good things in the world have a *different* origin from the bad things, whereas Nietzsche wants to experiment with the possibility, as is demanded by “the conscience of method,” that they actually have the same origin – the will to power.<sup>17</sup> Just as willing is the cause of both commanding and obeying, both enjoyment and pain, a single act of the will to power necessarily divides the world into two: the stronger and the weaker, the cause and the effect, the subject and the object, the truth and the untruth. Philosophizing thus is fundamentally anthropocentric and hence *political*. The doctrine of will to power is the least anthropocentric doctrine because it is fully aware of the anthropocentrism of all philosophies. It is a doctrine that has self-knowledge.

Immediately after the his explanation of the doctrine of will to power in aphorism 36, Nietzsche writes the following aphorism:

*“What? Doesn’t this mean, to speak with the vulgar: God is refuted, but the devil is not?” On the contrary! On the contrary, my friends. And, the devil – who forces you to speak with the vulgar?” (BGE, 37)*

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<sup>16</sup> Southwell also understands the will to power in terms of causation: the traditional separation of physical causation and will are rejected by Nietzsche and replaced by the doctrine of the will to power. Gareth Southwell, *A Beginner’s Guide to Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 40

<sup>17</sup> See also, Stuart Dalton, “Beginnings and Endings in Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*,” pp. 60

One is reminded of the third aphorism of GM's preface, where Nietzsche says in his "first philosophical effort," he writes about the origin of evil, and he attributes that to God as a kind of "honor." (GM, Preface) Nietzsche seems to think that only the vulgar believes that good and evil have different origins. Nietzsche thinks that he knows better, that good and evil both have their origins in the willing. But he is also cautious enough to take it as only a hypothesis and intends to experiment with it.<sup>18</sup> The doctrine of the will to power is after all the manifestation of Nietzsche's will to power – he does not deny it: what is *his* motivation and what could be the result? To what type of philosophical enterprise should he need such "hypothesis?"

### **2.3 Why the Will to Truth? Independence and Command**

From the previous analysis we can see that Nietzsche criticizes the philosophers before him, not so much because they are wrong in the sense of positing their own ideals onto the world and nature, as they lack self-knowledge: they are not aware of or they do not examine critically what *truly* motivates their pursuit and determines the shape of their philosophy. They are therefore childish and naïve. But, philosophizing, as the most spiritual form of will to power, is still respected by Nietzsche. Although he seems to attack the falseness and hypocrisy of Christianity ruthlessly, he still respects religious life and instincts and dismisses the modern "indifference toward religious

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<sup>18</sup> Van Tongeren also argues that the doctrine of will to power "denotes an interpretative perspective which planks itself opposite other interpretations." Paul J.M. van Togerem, *Reinterpreting Modern Culture: An Introduction to Nietzsche's Philosophy*, pp. 161

matters.” (BGE, 58) Thus, the doctrine of the will to power, is not supposed to take the place of all previous philosophies, but is to provide a starting point, an experimental hypothesis, that future philosophies could build on to create new visions of the world. But before that, we should consider another problem: why does Nietzsche insist on using the doctrine of the will to power as a working hypothesis? Granted that Nietzsche makes it clear that this doctrine is the least anthropocentric and hence has the most self-knowledge, does this alone make it preferable to other less “truthful” doctrines? In other words, if truth is terrible and deadly, Nietzsche still has to account for his own will to truth.

The first reason is I think necessity of circumstances. Just as Nietzsche says in the Preface of BGE, that Platonism has been overcome is already a *fact* in Europe. Modern philosophy, by attacking the old concept of soul in Christianity, has already destroyed much of Christianity’s spell over Europe. (BGE, 54) God as “father,” “judge,” “the rewarder,” and his “free will,” have all been refuted. (BGE, 53) The doctrine of the will to power only draws the final conclusion of modern philosophy so that it gets rid of the last residue of Christianity and Platonism, so that it can finally come to itself. (BGE, 56) For Nietzsche, this is as inevitable as a child would grow up and grow old:

*With the strength of his spiritual eye and insight grows distance and, as it were, the space around man: his world becomes more profound; ever new stars, ever new riddles and images become visible for him. Perhaps everything on which the spirit’s eye has exercised its acuteness and thoughtfulness was nothing but an occasion for this exercise, a playful matter, a something for children and those who are childish. (BGE, 57)*



The spirit's eye must become more acute and see more things than ever; this process itself is what the spirit's eye exists for, from childish to mature, from naïve to sophisticated. But immediately in the same aphorism Nietzsche claims that "the old man' will then be in need of another toy and another pain – still child enough, an eternal child." (BGE, 57)<sup>19</sup> It thus seems that for Nietzsche, modern philosophy and the doctrine of will to power, after all, are not the end of the story. They too must be overcome.

Still, the argument of historical necessity is not sufficient to account for why Nietzsche wants to play out the final conclusion of modern philosophy. Another possibility has already been suggested in the previous part, that is the intellectual conscience ("the conscience of method." BGE, 45). One thing Nietzsche faults with the previous philosophers is precisely that they are not honest enough to question or examine their own instincts and faiths, such as the faith in the opposite values.<sup>20</sup> But "truth" or "truthfulness" is far from unquestionably good for Nietzsche. It is even very wicked or evil. Yet, it seems that Nietzsche has determined to take this risk and be

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<sup>19</sup> In "On the three metamorphoses" in *Z*, Nietzsche explains that the final stage of metamorphoses should be "child" again, which corresponds to the assertion here: "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes.' For the game of creation, my bothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world." (*Z*, "On the three metamorphoses") "The child" is thus characterized by its creating ability.

<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in *Z*, Nietzsche argues that previous philosophers, namely those who are deemed to be "wise men," are in fact "servants of the people," not servants of truth. For Nietzsche those philosophers remain essentially "part of the people." (*Z*, "On the famous wise men.")

“evil.” He is determined to overcome the innocence or moral naivety of the past philosophers: “after all we should not be ‘merely moral’ men.” (BGE, 34)

*[A] philosopher has nothing less than a right to “bad character,” as the being who has so far always been fooled best on earth; he has a duty to suspicion today, to squint maliciously out of every abyss of suspicion. (BGE, 34)*

Thus, for Nietzsche, it is the “right and duty” of philosopher to suspect and question everything, even if this is “imprudent” and even “wicked.” It is a playful exercise of the spiritual eye that demands it. (BGE, 57) It would seem that Nietzsche, too, is dominated by the will to truth as much as the previous philosophers. The difference is that previous philosophers have relied on assumptions that they don’t question, namely that truth is good and lovable, therefore philosophizing is good and laudable. Nietzsche questions even that. Previous philosophers do not question the act of philosophizing itself or the philosopher himself. Hence they must lack self-knowledge. Nietzsche, on the contrary, takes philosophizing and the philosopher as a problem. (TI, “The Problem of Socrates”)

What reward could come from this radical intellectual conscience now that the correlation between truth and goodness is in doubt? Does Nietzsche seek any reward at all? If he does not, he would fall into a paradoxical position in which he claims to question the value of the will to truth, but in reality he himself still relies on the highest authority of intellectual conscience (or the unconditional will to truth) to *justify* his questioning. In aphorism 64 he expressly claims that “knowledge for its own sake” is the

“last snare of morality: with that one becomes completely entangled in it once more.”

Therefore I doubt that is what Nietzsche could accept. He says explicitly, after claiming that curiosity is perhaps “the most agreeable of all vices,” that “the love of truth has its reward in heaven and even on earth.” (BGE, 45) What could be the reward of the love of truth on earth?

Looking at the first three chapters, I think the values that Nietzsche most cherishes and thinks are fundamentally related to truth and truthfulness, are freedom and independence, and based on that, the art of commanding. (BGE, 29, 41, 43, 44) In other words, Nietzsche may secretly agree with Plato in that both pictures the philosopher as the king, but the difference seems to be that Nietzsche’s philosopher is king due to his freedom and independence, while Plato’s philosopher king is characterized by his knowledge of the Good. But it is possible that they are only seemingly different. This is also compatible with his doctrine of the will to power: in the sense that the philosopher overcomes and has the most profound knowledge of all the other passions that rule the rest of human beings, his complete freedom/independence and supreme art of commanding gives him the supreme power over the rest of human beings. His will to power cannot be any better fulfilled.

Judging from Nietzsche’s standard the previous philosophers are still unfree because they are dogmatically attached to their own “truth.” They are not aware that one’s own truth is not necessarily the truth of everyone: “great things remain for the

great, abysses for the profound, nuances and shudders for the refined, and, in brief, all that is rare for the rare." (BGE, 43) So the coming philosophers will be the friends of "truth" but certainly not dogmatists. Therefore they would not sacrifice themselves for their truth. (BGE, 25, 31) They will wear masks and move as fast as a rapidly flowing river with a presto tempo. (BGE, 25, 27, 28, 40)

Philosophy used to be a tragedy because the spirit necessarily invents "the erroneousness of the world," "the falseness of the world." (BGE, 34) Philosophers are thus "forced" to become the martyr. (BGE, 25) But Nietzsche believes that "[t]here are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic; and rolling together all the woe of the world – who could dare to decide whether its sight would *necessarily* seduce us and compel us to feel pity and thus double this woe?" (BGE, 30) The attainment of these heights requires a very strong soul.

Indeed, the freedom and independence one can obtain, which is determined by the amount of truth one can endure, is dependent on how strong and daring one is. (BGE, 29) A man must test himself a lot in order to know whether he is born to be independent and commanding. He should not remain stuck to a lot of things that are so dear to him in order to "conserve oneself:" fatherland, pity, a science, even one's own virtue and detachment. (BGE, 41) Nietzsche quotes Stendhal, "A banker who has made a fortune has one character trait that is needed for making discoveries in philosophy, that is to say, for seeing clearly into what is." (BGE, 40)

On such a spiritual journey the philosopher remains mostly and necessarily in solitude (BGE, 25, 29). Does this mean that the philosopher is apolitical and remains detached from the rest of human beings? What is the relationship between the philosopher and the rest of human beings? Does he love them? In Plato the philosopher has to be “coerced” to rule; but Nietzsche’s answer seems to be quite ambiguous.<sup>21</sup> He does claim that “to love man *for God’s sake* – that has so far been the noblest and most remote feeling attained among men.” Man himself is not lovable; there should be some “ulterior intent to sanctify” the love of man. (BGE, 60) But Nietzsche does not specify what this “ulterior intent” is. Could it be the will to power?

What is certain is that the new philosophers would rule differently from the previous ones. Whereas previous philosophers preach their own truth to the crowd in the hope that they would accept it, the new philosophers need to know the art of commanding better. They do not share their truth with anyone else. They use religion as a *means* to command, to cultivate and educate people. (BGE, 61, 62) Here, Nietzsche makes a sharp distinction between philosophy and religion, and insists religion should always remain a tool of philosophy. If we recall that Nietzsche says Christianity is Platonism for the people (BGE, Preface) and previous philosophies are nothing less than

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<sup>21</sup> One important view is that Nietzsche only cares about those elite persons and want to liberate them from their moral feelings, but does not care about the rest of society. See, Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

“a religious interpretation of existence,” (BGE, 59) it seems that he takes the previous philosophies to be more like religion than philosophy.

Nietzsche has made it clear that the opposite values actually have the same origin, namely the will to power, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that if the philosopher’s task is to raise his soul to the highest possible height, it becomes also imperative that he go down to the lowest possible level. (BGE, 26) This is what Nietzsche sets out to do in the following chapters, namely to explore the depths of the soul as the hunter in the forest. (BGE, 46) That is the reason why Nietzsche says at the end of the first chapter that “psychology is now again the path to the fundamental problems” and psychology in his definition is precisely “morphology and the development of the doctrine of the will to power.” (BGE, 23)<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Van Tongeren, *Reinterpreting Modern Culture: An Introduction to Nietzsche’s Philosophy*, pp. 155

### 3. Second Part: Who is the Philosopher of the Future?

In the previous part we have examined Nietzsche's critical engagement with the traditional philosophy and religion. His attitude is neither simple rejection nor total affirmation. On the one hand, he gives the whole enterprise of philosophy and religion his highest respect; on the other hand, he criticizes the philosophers and religious people in the past for lacking self-knowledge. Their philosophy/religion is fundamentally dependent on some type of passion or instinct, but they are not aware of that or pretend to be "objective" and "disinterested." This mistake is related to a more fundamental mistake, namely the presupposition that opposite values must have different origins, and the supreme value must have originated outside human beings or beyond this world. Nietzsche proposes a bold hypothesis that the opposite values, both the good and the evil, flow from one single source: the will to power. Thus the opposite values are not truly opposite *in nature*, but they are different types and manifestations of will to power that differ *in degree*. Philosophizing as the most spiritual will to power requires the strongest will, particularly philosophizing in Nietzsche's sense. For Nietzsche, philosophizing should not be merely relying on one dominating drive in the soul and sublimating it. It should resist the temptation to rest on any such stable foundation. It requires the ruthless questioning and examining of every sort of drives in the human soul that have emerged in history. It must "go down" to explore the depth of the soul in order to attain heights of the soul. This inquiry is fundamentally motivated by the will to

power and thus is aimed at complete freedom and independence, in order to command and rule the rest of human beings.

This is what Nietzsche has learned from and rejected in the philosophical and metaphysical tradition. What he sets out to do in the last five chapters of BGE, is to build on this foundation and carry on the exploration of the soul. The soul for Nietzsche is not an everlasting, unchanging generic entity; but consists of numerous competing drives that constantly strive for domination. Thus, the soul can undergo historical transformation and development. This leads Nietzsche to suggest we can best understand the soul in terms of different *types*. By exploring the history and development of different types of souls, Nietzsche is clearly concerned with the highest type or the noblest type, presumably the philosopher of the future. The major theme of the second part can be summarized as an attempt to outline in detail what the philosopher of the future should be like and what his task is.

Nietzsche approaches this problem both negatively and positively. The whole second part can be viewed as a gradual ascent from the basest type to the highest type. The first is the modern democratic type of soul that is characterized by “morality of timidity.” The second type is represented by the scientific men or scholars, whose scientific spirit elevates them somehow over the general modern type, but is still fundamentally based on democratic instincts. The third type is the soul of free spirit of *today*, which is fundamentally modern, but also has virtues that are laudable and



distinctive. But still, the free spirit is characterized by a fundamental tension and hence still experience itself as a problem. This tension is more clearly manifested in the tension between man and woman. This is further developed into the fourth type of the soul, which is the soul of we “good Europeans,” which is still more a possibility than a reality. Nietzsche attempts to explore it by examining the different types of the soul in different countries of Europe today. In the last chapter he finally gives his tentative answer to the question of the highest type, the noble type of human beings. A careful reading reveals that Nietzsche distinguishes three dimension of this noblest type, namely the noble man, the hermit philosopher and the philosophizing god. The noble man is the highest type viewed from outside, the hermit philosopher as viewed from within, and the philosophizing god as the ideal philosopher.

### ***3.1 The Science of Morals and the Herd Type***

In the first part of BGE, Nietzsche’s chief concern is to reveal the importance of the doctrine of will to power and to show how that can serve as a working hypothesis for philosophical inquiries. One essential implication of the doctrine of the will to power is methodology; Nietzsche thinks that previous philosophies try to look for “a rational foundation of morality” while taking morality for granted. They never question “the common faith in the prevalent morality” but just express it in a more systematized manner. (BGE, 186) Instead Nietzsche suggests “a typology of morals” that takes the

very phenomenon of morality as a problem and explores what factors have conditioned the emergence of such and such moralities. (BGE, 186)

The doctrine of the will to power also teaches the fundamental oneness of the origin of both good and evil: that means, the world is fundamentally characterized by duality and tension of different opposites; these opposites cannot exist alone but in pairs. Nietzsche has suggested this duality in the fifth chapter and he regards the herd morality as a fundamental attempt to eradicate such tension that is the essence of human existence. In trying to eradicate evil and suffering, the modern herd type of morality also inadvertently destroys the possibilities for goodness and greatness. (BGE, 198)

Nietzsche takes morality as a “a sign language of the affects.” (BGE, 187) The different moralities themselves are the surface and masks of deeper drives and motivations that operate in us; these are like the dark bodies around the stars that could never be seen, hence we must “infer” their existence. (BGE, 196) This does not mean that the dark bodies are more important or fundamental than the stars, but as Nietzsche suggests, that they actually exist together and rely on each other. Despite their apparent opposition, they actually have the same origin in the life’s will to power.

Nietzsche continues to explain the different manifestations of the duality or tension. The first and the most important of its kind is the tension between morality and “nature.” (BGE, 188) It should be noted that in this aphorism all of the mentions of “nature” are put in quotation marks except for the last one, which appears in the “moral

imperative of nature." All the "nature" put in the quotation marks stress the quality of *laissez aller* or letting go of "nature," which is the common understanding of it. Nietzsche emphasizes the fact that these moralities are arbitrary and tyrannical, and have led to both great and disastrous results, but they are absolutely indispensable. In the last paragraph, Nietzsche does not use quotation marks when talking about "the moral imperative of nature," which suggests that he is not totally against the idea that nature is moral and commands morally. Yet certainly nature's morality is different from the commonly understood human morality. These arbitrary human moralities are just "sign language" or appearances of a still deeper and more profound morality of nature, that is the will to power. "In all her prodigal and indifferent magnificence," nature demands the will to power, which ultimately manifests itself in the restraints imposed on human beings – moralities. (BGE, 188) In so far as the will to power is the source of both good and evil, nature is beyond good and evil.

He then uses an example to illustrate this complex relationship between nature and morality. It seems that despite the appearance of mutually exclusive functioning, morality and nature actually enhance each other. Nietzsche remarks that the occasional fasts instituted by ancient legislators are actually designed to "*purify and sharpen*" the drives and desires that they seemingly suppress. It is reasonable to assume then that true *laissez faire* will not lead to the thriving of the drives, but probably would cause them to drain themselves. (BGE, 198) The recognition of the mutual enhancement of

opposite powers is essential to understand Nietzsche's science of morals, and this is also in line with his notion of the will to power as the source of opposite values.

This tension is further illustrated in the "ancient theological problem of the 'faith' and 'knowledge' – or, more clearly, of instinct and reason." (BGE, 191) Nietzsche's attitude on this problem seems at the first glance very ambiguous. In the first paragraph, in his description of Socrates' thinking, he seems to side with "instinct" or "faith," because Socrates, although first sided with reason, finally realized that he too is driven by instincts and there is "at bottom" "irrational element in moral judgments." (BGE, 191) But in the second paragraph, after he claims that Plato has tried to prove that reason and instinct are actually aimed at the same goal, the good, he says that after Plato, "in moral matters" instinct and faith have triumphed. (BGE, 191) Because Nietzsche has a negative opinion of Platonism, he seems to condemn this triumph of the instinct. But in the last sentence, where he mentions Descartes as the father of rationalism and "the grandfather of the Revolution," he seems to doubt that the concession of authority to reason alone is also not a wise choice. How to understand this ambiguity?

This can be better understood by reading the next aphorism, which reveals the mutual dependence of knowledge and faith. In order to "know" anything, we must have "the rash hypotheses, the fictions, the good dumb will to 'believe'." In other words, a certain "faith" is necessary if we are to get any knowledge at all. (BGE, 192) Yet these "faiths" are not stable and should not remain stable, but are constantly subject to further

scrutiny in light of different strategies of observations. Indeed, it is precisely the effort to “know” that provides the occasion for us to “create” our vision of the world, namely our faith. Knowledge and faith thus are fundamentally dependent on each other. Once we stop desiring to know, we also stop believing in anything. Indeed, Nietzsche thinks that the problems we set for ourselves are only “steps to self-knowledge, sign-posts to the problem we are,” “to the great stupidity we are, to our spiritual *fatum*, to what is *unteachable* very ‘deep down.’” (BGE, 231) Thus, the fundamental self-knowledge is also the recognition of fundamental faith of a person that determines who he is. Therefore, Nietzsche does not think that either the precedence of reason over instinct or instinct over reason is preferable, but one has to recognize that these two, although seemingly contradictory, have the same origin and cannot exist alone. The greatest knowledge coexists with the strongest faith in oneself – that is perhaps how Nietzsche envisions a man with an abundance of will to power.

In light of this understanding we can better understand Nietzsche’s notion of “the slave rebellion in morals” and “morality as timidity.” (BGE, 195, 197) At the bottom of this inversion of values is the separation of these opposite values and the assertion that they have different origins. They have invented “heaven” as opposed to the “world” which is the origin for all the bad and evil things. (BGE, 195) The hatred and the fear for evil things have led them to teach moralities that are chiefly directed against “affects,” either by suppression or by spiritualization making them moderate and

harmless. (BGE, 198) These moralities make people mediocre. Nietzsche thinks this is like the suspicion that men from “temperate zones” have for the “tropical man,” who is “man of prey” and is dangerous. (BGE, 197)

It should be noted that Nietzsche’s assessment of the herd morality is not all negative. As has been analyzed above, all types of morality as a kind of discipline and channeling of nature’s will to power, have the effect of enabling people to achieve things in the world. The training of obedience through the herd morality, although based on fear and hatred, has been most instrumental for the survival of the human communities. (BGE, 199, 201) Nietzsche acknowledges that even in Rome, the mother of morality is still “fear of the neighbor” rather than “love of the neighbor.” (BGE, 201) But the morality in Rome, as in other earlier societies, is not herd morality in its most developed form. This morality of fear and hatred would evolve and come to its full consequence once the external conditions permit. It would take advantage of every opportunity to wipe out tensions and dangers that are the inevitable consequence of the will to power. Before, tensions and dangers are a *fact* of the world they live in, particularly between communities, and they need the powerful individuals to protect and command them (thus tensions are preserved within the community because of the tensions outside the community); now these tensions and dangers from outside the community seem insignificant and dispensable, they see little point in maintaining those within the community. (BGE, 201) Therefore, paradoxically, people dominated by herd morality at

the same time loathe obedience and commanding. Their hope is that “we want that some day there should be nothing anymore to be afraid of!” (BGE, 201) That means that they are fundamentally against hierarchy and hence both obedience and commanding. Their ideal is “autonomous herd” without masters and “special right and privilege.” (BGE, 202) Precisely because they are inimical to hierarchy and ranks, they uphold their own herd morality as the only morality possible and have done their utmost to impose this morality on those who are born to command. (BGE, 199, 201) It is this hubris of the herd morality, which is the inevitable development of its internal logic, that Nietzsche abhors the most and seeks to prevent with the introduction of the new philosophers. (BGE, 203)

Thus, for Nietzsche, since both good and evil originate from the will to power, if strong will can be good and bad, weak will is definitely *not* good. Therefore, the efforts to suppress affects, to acquire rest and tranquility, to make one “soft and tender”, are all characteristic of the weak will. Herd morality is essentially the manifestation of this weak will. It is acceptable so long as it is in a subjugated position, but if it seeks to dominate the strong will, it would ultimately lead to disastrous consequences such as anarchism or “the animalization of man into the dwarf animals of equal rights and claims.” (BGE, 203) Nietzsche believes this is what the democratic and socialist movement is heading towards.

### **3.2 The Intermediate Types: the Scholars and the Modern Free Spirit**

After making the transition from the doctrine of the will to power to the discussion of different types of souls, Nietzsche sets out to discuss the central problem of the second part of the book: who is the philosopher of the future? Up until now we have only a general idea of what he should be like: he is characterized by complete freedom and independence, hence must possess the art of commanding; he has a strong will and the most spiritual will to power. That picture of the philosopher of the future is not detailed and subtle enough. The following two chapters, chapter 6 and 7, are therefore an attempt to give a more specific idea of what the philosopher of the future looks like by exploring two types of souls that are superior to the herd but are still not quite the philosopher of the future himself. These are two intermediate types, which I call the scholars or the scientific men and the modern free spirit.

Nietzsche seems to endorse the intermediate types to some extent. The title of the sixth chapter is "We scholars," and he mentions more than once in the book "we free spirit."<sup>1</sup> He seems to approve many of the qualities of these intermediate types, but he is also critical of their insufficiencies. Their virtue is also simultaneously their stupidity and it requires great art and delicacy to not fall into such stupidity. (BGE, 227) Another important trait of the intermediate type is that they are both profoundly modern. They

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Strauss, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*" in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, pp. 186



are certainly no simple advocates for modern ideas, but they are the embodiment of the most cunning and subtle modern spirit that the innocent and noble ancient types know little of. They are the products of the mixture of races that is characteristic of the modern age and must necessarily experience the tension and conflict of different drives in the spirit. (BGE, 200) Because of these tensions and conflicts they are prone to skepticism, nihilism, critical thinking, objectivity, historicism and honesty. These qualities are all highly instrumental for the philosopher, but they are not the *goal* in themselves. For Nietzsche, most of them are still not *born* to be philosophers and commanders.

In the chapter on scholars of today, Nietzsche raises problem of the hierarchy of science and philosophy in the first aphorism of the chapter. (BGE, 204) Nietzsche sees the emancipation of the scholar from philosophy as in essence the same event as the democratic movement: "Freedom from all masters!" (BGE, 204) But at the same time he finds this state of affairs entirely understandable given the respective situation of science and philosophy. Science, particularly natural science, has made tremendous progresses and thus is in "good conscience." But philosophy today has lost any grip on "the masterly task and masterfulness of philosophy" which can be seen in Heraclitus, Plato and Empedocles. (BGE, 204) What does Nietzsche mean by this claim? Why should science be subordinate to philosophy and what is the masterly task of philosophy?

Nietzsche goes on to elaborate on the four types of typical scholars, or four typical characteristics of the scholar: scientific men (BGE, 206), objective men (BGE, 207), skeptical men (BGE, 208), and critical men (BGE, 210, 211).

The scientific men, the objective men and the skeptic men all suffered from one essential shortcoming, which is the lack of judgment, the overall judgment of life, and the inability to affirm life, because they are too cautious and *prudent* to do so. (BGE, 205, 208)<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche acknowledges that this is a predicament facing every man of science and philosophy today, since the tower of science has become so huge that one risks becoming a “dilettante” if not becoming a “specialist.” (BGE, 205) Thus he “wisely” or “prudently” shuns the “duty” or “right” to such an overall judgment of life. Thus for Nietzsche, the origin of the scientific, objective and skeptical men is the fundamental lack of courage, for the true philosopher “risks himself *constantly*, he plays the wicked game.” (BGE, 205)<sup>3</sup> But he clearly does not think that everyone could be such a philosopher if he or she was just a bit braver: philosopher cannot “be taught,” one must be born to “know it” “from experience,” which is very rare. (BGE, 213) Therefore, ultimately the scientific man does not “choose” to be merely “scientific.” He is predestined to be so.

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<sup>2</sup> Also in Z, Nietzsche points out that the essential feature of scholar is that “they sit cool in the cool shade: in everything they want to be mere spectators, and they beware of sitting where the sun burns on the steps.” In other words, the scholar deliberately maintains objectiveness at the expense of a positive judgment.

<sup>3</sup> In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche says “how much truth does a spirit dare, how much truth does it dare?...Error (faith in the ideal) is not blindness, error is cowardice.” (EH, 3)

Such men are still fundamentally dependent.<sup>4</sup> They are not masters, not self-sufficient nor noble, (BGE, 206) because they lack a sense of self, but pride themselves on that. They are just like mirrors that reflect everything around them, but they do not love or hate. (BGE, 207) This is due to a fundamental “paralysis of the will.” (BGE, 208) Just as has been analyzed above, the will to power is the origin of both good and evil, and the scientific, objective and skeptical man’s reluctance to make judgments is characteristic of such lack or paralysis of the will. Nietzsche again traces this weakness of the will to physiological causes, particularly the mixture of races in Europe today. (BGE, 200, 208)

Thus, Nietzsche once again attributes the insufficiency of the scientific, objective and skeptical men to the weakness in the will to power, which is the essence of herd morality. Although the scientific, objective and skeptic men are superior to the average herd man, in that they have the strength of will to refrain from herd moral judgment, they are still lacking in any *positive* will to power. Thus Nietzsche compares them to the old maid who is incapable of giving birth to anything. (BGE, 206)

The last type of men, the critics, seem to be a bit different from the scientific, objective and skeptical men, in that the former have “the certainty of value standards, the deliberate employment of a unity of method, a shrewd courage, the ability to stand

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<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche also points out in GM that the scientific, positivist men of today, who refuses to believe there is any truth, actually still “have faith in truth.” They are the “most spiritualized product” of the ascetic ideal. (GM, “Third Essay,” 24)

alone and give an account of themselves.” (BGE, 210) It seems therefore that the critics are superior to the skeptics because they at least can make judgments about life.

However, Nietzsche seems to prefer the skeptics and scorn the critics. It is the “truth” of the critics that Nietzsche despises. Their truth seems to be “enthusiastic, idealistic, feminine, hermaphroditic,” and they are satisfied and pleased with such “truth.” Thus, the prime example of critics, Kant, is at best merely one of the “philosophical laborers” rather than genuine philosopher. (BGE, 211) The work of philosophical laborers is to render the “former *positings* of values” into systems and formulas which would make them easy to grasp and understand. But the genuine philosophers are “commanders and legislators” who must “create values” rather than inherit and systematize old values. (BGE, 211)

Thus, it is logical to conclude that genuine philosophers are necessarily philosophers of the future, namely “a man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow,”<sup>5</sup> which means that “his enemy was ever the ideal of today.” (BGE, 212) But still, if we take this description literally, it would seem that philosophers do not have their own standards but are reactive to the historical situation.<sup>6</sup> That is not the case. Nietzsche

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<sup>5</sup> Nehamas, “Who is Nietzsche’s Philosopher of the Future?” in *Reading Nietzsche*, pp. 58

<sup>6</sup> For example, Vattimo also thinks that Nietzsche’s conception of “active nihilism” as opposed to “passive nihilism,” is still reactive in its effort to “transcend one’s own interest in self-preservation.” Gianni Vattimo, “The Two Senses of Nihilism in Nietzsche,” *Dialogue with Nietzsche*, pp. 140

clarifies immediately that the goal of the philosophers is a kind of “greatness of soul,”<sup>7</sup> but different historical circumstances require different strategies. (BGE, 212) What exactly constitutes the “greatness of soul” is explained in greater detail in the last two chapters.

The scholars are not sufficient, fundamentally because they are not born or cultivated for the task of philosophy. (BGE, 213) Philosophizing should combine “a bold and exuberant spirituality that runs *presto* and a dialectical severity and necessity that takes no false step.” (BGE, 213) Yet for most of the scholars, thinking for them is a grave and serious task; they have no idea of a kind of “divine frivolity” that gives them the freedom of spirit. (BGE, 193) It thus seems that it is vital for philosophers to combine opposite tendencies in an artful and elegant manner without becoming grave, ponderous and contradictory. This lies at the heart of the difficulty the intermediate types encounter. They possess some of the virtues of the philosophers, but they are so attached to their virtues that they become slaves to these virtues rather than their masters. This inability to live joyfully and lightly with contradictions and tensions is the most essential deficiency of the intermediate type.

In the next chapter (chapter 7) Nietzsche continues to elaborate on this deficiency of the intermediate type. The modern free spirit has already got rid of the moralistic

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<sup>7</sup> In AC Nietzsche also mentions that “That requires greatness of soul: the service of truth is the hardest service.” (AC, 50)

cliché prevalent in the age of our father: pity (BGE, 222), disinterestedness (BGE, 220), the soporific English morality (BGE, 228) – now “morality as a pose, offends our taste today.” (BGE, 214, 216) But this very freedom has started to become another kind of moralistic pedantry. In aphorism 221 Nietzsche let a moralistic pedant express similar ideas about unegoistic morality that he himself clearly supports, but adds at the end that “one should not be too right if one wants to have those who laugh on one’s own side; a grain of wrong actually belongs to good taste.” (BGE, 221) Indeed, the freedom of the modern free spirit is also marked by a profound chaos in the soul. (BGE, 224) Just as Nietzsche points out in the beginning of the chapter, “we modern men are determined, thanks to the complicated mechanics of our ‘starry sky,’ by *different* moralities.” (BGE, 215) This is at the same time our virtue *and* our vice.<sup>8</sup>

This profound chaos is perhaps caused by, and in turn manifests itself most clearly, in one of the most salient feature of the modern spirit, which is the historical sense. Today because of the free spirit’s lack of self and measure, we become open to all sorts of value systems and life styles and try them on like costumes. (BGE, 223) This kind of courageous, patient and accommodating openness is ignoble because it is unable to grasp “the perfection and ultimate maturity of every culture and art, that which is really noble in a work or human being, the moment when their sea is smooth and they have

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<sup>8</sup> Guay expresses similar understanding in his analysis of “our virtues” that “internal complexity is a shortcoming, but at the same time an accomplishment.” Guay, “Our virtues,” pp. 76

found halcyon self-sufficiency, the golden and cold aspect of all things that have consummated themselves.” (BGE, 224) But for the free spirit, such a state of perfection is not attainable at least for now; their virtues and missions consist precisely in this kind of tensions. Now they still need to *suffer* from it. Suffering is what they should applaud and embrace now, because they still have the mission of creating themselves and human beings. (BGE, 225) Thus, cruelty and honesty of the intellectual conscience, as a force against the basic will of the spirit to ignorance and deception, is still the most important feature of “free, very free spirit.” (BGE, 227, 229, 230; GM, “Second Essay,” 6)

But still, it is clear that this cruel intellectual conscience and honesty is not the *end* or *task* in itself – such virtues are instrumental for creating the new values, which are embodied in the philosopher himself. The tensions and contradictions themselves are not the goal; the goal is something much more loftier and surer. Let us look at two relevant paragraphs:

*“High spirituality itself exists only as the ultimate product of moral qualities; that it is a synthesis of all those states which are attributed to “merely moral” men, after they have been acquired singly through long discipline and exercise, perhaps through whole chains of generations; that high spirituality is the spiritualization of justice and of that gracious severity which knows that it is its mission to maintain the order of rank in the world, among things themselves – not only among men.” (BGE, 219)*

*“To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over the eternal basic text of homo natura; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man as even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the rest of nature, with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long, “you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin!” – that may be a strange and insane task, but it is a task.” (BGE, 230)*

Both passages imply that the task of the philosopher is to maintain a certain kind of order in the world, but not *any* kind of order, but an order of rank that is to some extent “natural.”<sup>9</sup> That does not mean that “interpretations” are not necessary, but it means that the philosopher should never lose sight of the basic text of nature, of the will to power; he must be “masters” of these moralities and interpretations, having examined all of them *critically* and *objectively* with *historical sense*; he must use them to fulfill his purpose of creating human beings that are more natural and stronger, namely as like himself as it is possible to achieve (most of men can not become him). Therefore, both the scientific men and the free spirit type are still not philosopher, because they are unable to affirm life and the world.

### ***3.3 The Soul and Music: the Possibilities of “We Good Europeans”***

It might seem very peculiar and at odds with my interpretation that Nietzsche turns to discuss “peoples and fatherlands” in Europe when he is trying to delineate what the philosophy/philosopher of the future is like. I have argued that the structure of the second part of BGE is a gradual ascent from the basest type of soul to the highest type, which is the philosopher. If so, why should Nietzsche discuss the different types of

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<sup>9</sup> In TI Nietzsche also says that “I too speak of a ‘return to nature,’ although it is really not a going back but an ascent – up into the high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness where great tasks are something one plays with, one may play with.” (TI, “Skirmishes of an untimely man,” 48)



Europeans before he explains the highest type of soul? What does such discussion have to do with the philosophy/philosopher of the future?

Nietzsche's philosophy is at the same time sensitive to historical and cultural situations and faithful to eternal standards. The task of the philosopher is to explore a new concept of the greatness of human beings (BGE, 212) in the aftermath of the collapse of the whole Platonist enterprise, which is fundamentally the same task as "translating man back into nature," (BGE, 230) Nietzsche must use the conditions and materials available to help him achieve his goals. Now he sees in Europe two fundamentally irresistible tendencies that he could take advantage of: the first is the collapse of Platonism, which has led to the rise of free spirit, which also, however, runs the risk of general skepticism and nihilism (BGE, Preface); the second is the general chaos in society that has led to the mixture of races, classes and nations (BGE, 200, 242, 248). The democratization and equalization of the Europe is both the cause and effect of this general chaos. Nietzsche thinks that both have given rise to a general weakening in people's will to power, which in turn reinforces the chaos both in the soul and in society; but he also regards this situation as a rare opportunity to develop a new order in the soul and in society that is different from the old order maintained by Platonism. The problem is, what does such order look like? What makes it different from the old order? For Nietzsche, the discussion of the political and cultural situation in Europe is closely related to the discussion of the highest possible type of soul, for he is also of the opinion

that the structure of the soul resembles the structure of a political society (BGE, 19), and thus the chaos in Europe today is fundamentally rooted in the chaos of the soul of the modern Europeans. The discussion of different types of the souls of different European countries is thus an attempt to explore the possibility of finding a new type of “European soul” that is neither chaotic nor plain and flattened by herd morality.<sup>10</sup>

One sign of this general chaos is precisely the nationalistic feelings and tendencies prevalent in Europe today, particularly in Germany. Although this is arguably a manifestation of the will to power and is better than the feminine skepticism and nihilism (BGE, 209), Nietzsche still scorns this because he sees this as still fundamentally “petty politics.” (BGE, 208) Nationalism is still a form of narrow, parochial will to power, hence it is “petty.” It is unable to help the statesman to fight for the great politics in the next century whose goal is “the dominion of the earth.” (BGE, 208) For Nietzsche, strength is not primarily physical power, although physical power is very important; it is the strength of the will, which is fundamentally guaranteed by the greatness of the soul and “a great thought.” (BGE, 241) Physical power is arguably only a manifestation of the strength of the will. For Nietzsche, the true commander and legislator can only be the true philosopher, who has the most spiritual and strongest will

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<sup>10</sup> In “On the thousand and one goal” in Z, Nietzsche argues that every great people in history has set for itself some kind of goal, and hence, the lacking of a goal for the humanity as a whole implies the fact that the humanity as a whole, as a *real* entity, is yet to be achieved. (Z, “On the thousand and one goal”) Similarly, here Nietzsche thinks that a type of “good European” is still lacking despite the fact that Europe wants to be one, and it is an imperative task that a goal for Europe as a whole be envisioned. (BGE, 256)

to power, thus is able to give true “orders.” The politicians that rely on the popular support and nationalistic feelings are not true commanders; they just bow to the masses – they are “servants of the people,” not their masters. (BGE, 241) But still, since the will to power is both the origin of good and evil, these two types of “tyrant” – the spiritual or philosophical tyrant and the political tyrant – come dangerously close and are most likely to rise in an age where chaos reign and the herd craves for a master. (BGE, 242) Nietzsche is constantly alert to the duality of the effect of the will to power (which is the core of his objection to the traditional metaphysics) and thus aware of the risk and danger involved in his enterprise. Still he believes in the possibility of finding a type of soul that could lead to the improvement and advancement of the people in Europe in the next century, which entails a type of human being that is stronger and more natural. That is the soul of the philosopher and his task: “a new synthesis” and “the European of the future.” (BGE, 256)

Nietzsche’s vision of the new order in a future Europe and in the soul of the future Europeans is certainly not like Kant’s ideal of “perpetual peace.” It is richer, more complex, profounder and more stimulating than the soporific and boring type of order. Just as Acamora and Pearson point out, the problem can be framed as “how is it that a multiplicity becomes united, becomes potent rather than dysfunctional?”<sup>11</sup> It should be

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<sup>11</sup> Christa Acamora and Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil: A Reader’s Guide*, pp. 178

noted that the first and last aphorism of the eighth chapter both have substantial portion of the passage devoted to the music of Richard Wagner. For Nietzsche, the problem of the order, both in the soul and in society, seems to be closely related to the problem of music. Music provides the possibility of maintaining order and peace without losing vitality, richness and diversity; it is possible to maintain balance between opposing and conflicting tendencies characteristic of the will to power. But for Nietzsche, not all types of music are good and there is certainly an order of rank among different types of music. In chapter 8 Nietzsche seems to think there is a correspondence between music and soul, and the order of rank of music reflects fundamentally the order of rank in the soul.

The first aphorism is a description of Richard Wagner's overture to the opera *Meistersinger*, which is meant to be at the same time a description of the German spirit or the German soul. Taken together with aphorism 244 and 245, we can have a general understanding of what Nietzsche thinks the German spirit is. It is first of all characterized by its richness and complexity, thus seems to be heavy and profound. It contains things of opposite origins and contradictory. The German soul poses itself as labyrinths and riddles. But Nietzsche thinks that this seeming profundity is actually a kind of disguise or deception to conceal the real emptiness, instability and uncertainty of the Germans about themselves:

*"[A] truly genuine token of the German soul which is at the same time young and superannuated, overly mellow and still overrich in future. This kind of music expresses best what I think of the Germans: they belong to the day before yesterday and the day after tomorrow – as yet they have no today." (BGE, 240)*

*“The German himself is not, he becomes, he ‘develops.’ ‘Development’ is therefore the truly German find and hit in the great realm of philosophical formulas – a governing concept that, united with German beer and German music, is at work trying to Germanize the whole of Europe.” (BGE, 244)*

*“The German drags his soul along: whatever he experiences he drags. He digests his events badly, he never gets ‘done’ with them; German profundity is often merely a hard and sluggish ‘digestion.’” (BGE, 244)*

Thus the German spirit is very much like the intermediate type Nietzsche describes in the previous two chapters: it has acute senses and subtle feelings, it has eager curiosity and is open to all kinds of possibilities, but fundamentally it is not sure about itself. This uncertainty and tensions make it serious, heavy and clumsy. It constantly seeks itself and hence does not deserve high respect. (BGE, 266) It lacks the “divine frivolity” and “noble taste.” (BGE, 193, 224)<sup>12</sup>

This shortcoming is also manifest in the German language, particularly its sound and tempo. Nietzsche uses two aphorisms to complain about the lack of appropriate tempo and the art of reading in the German language. (BGE, 246, 247a) For Nietzsche, it seems that language itself is fundamentally a kind of music: “the crescendos, inflections, and reversals of tone and changes in tempo in which the ancient *public* world took delight” are more important than the actual content of the speech. (BGE, 247a) The tempo and rhythm of the language makes it a fundamentally political art, rhetoric, which can “grow into” people’s hearts. (BGE, 247a) Music, language, soul and politics

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<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche also says in TI that “light feet are the first attribute of divinity.” (TI, “The Four Great Errors,” 2)

become closely associated with one another in Nietzsche's philosophy, in that they pertain to the order or structure of different drives in the soul.<sup>13</sup> His standard of judgment may be very subtle to describe specifically, but it is certain that he prefers a kind of powerful and elegant mastering and commanding of the order and arrangement of all the drives and elements in the a speech, a piece of music or the soul, for example, the ancient politician's art of speech:

*"A period in the classical sense is above all a physiological unit, insofar as it is held together by a single breath. Such periods as are found in Demosthenes and Cicero, swelling twice and coming down twice, all within a single breath, are delights for the men of antiquity who, from their own training, knew how to esteem their virtue and how rare and difficult was the delivery of such a period. We really have no right to the great period, we who are modern and in every sense short of breath." (BGE, 247a)*

This "short of breath" implies also a "short" of the power in the soul, the inability to command and digest all the feelings and drives that comprise the soul.<sup>14</sup> This weakness is characteristic of German romanticism which Nietzsche thinks rules German music after Beethoven, which was fundamentally "a small taste," "a German event" instead of "the voice for the soul of Europe." Thus, in all his discussion of music and language, he is in fact considering the problem of a new type of soul for the future Europeans, particularly its ruling class.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, Nietzsche thinks that "good is any style that communicates an inward state, that makes no mistake about signs, the gestures – all the laws about long periods are concerned with the art of gestures." (EH, "Why I write such good books," 4)

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Burnham, *Reading Nietzsche: An Analysis of Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 178

Nietzsche clearly thinks that the German spirit is insufficient a type to become the soul of we “good Europeans.” It must be complemented by the Southern spirit, which is embodied in the French spirit. “The artistic passions,” “the psychological oversensitvity and curiosity,” “the synthesis of the north and south” are the three things that make the French spirit superior. (BGE, 254) The elegance, cheerfulness and delicacy of the French spirit combined with the German profundity and complexity is perhaps able to produce a kind of soul that is nobly European. This combination is like the marriage of woman and man: the German is the masculine nation which “above all begets and wants to beget,” the French is the feminine nation who “prefers being fertilized and giving birth.” (BGE, 248) In the last aphorism, Nietzsche again returns to Wagner’s, this time he thinks that Wagner has been able to transcend what is merely German.<sup>15</sup>

There are two other important nations in Europe that are distinct from both the German and the French, the Jews and the English. Nietzsche’s attitude towards these two nations is quite ambiguous. But one thing is certain: Nietzsche thinks both nations are very powerful and possess the strength of will that are much stronger than both the German and the French.<sup>16</sup> The Jews and the English are more adamant in their moralities

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<sup>15</sup> See also, GM, “Third Essay,” 3, where Nietzsche argues that Wagner’s Parsifal has transcended his earlier works.

<sup>16</sup> In AC, Nietzsche also argues that “the Jewish people are a people endowed with the toughest vital energy, who, placed in impossible circumstances, voluntarily and out of the most profound prudence of self-preservation, take sides with all the instincts of decadence.” (AC, First Book, 24)

and beliefs, and hence much better off. (BGE, 250, 252) For the Jews, Nietzsche thinks that if they are willing, they could easily rule the entire Europe; but they don't want to and even try to simulate into different nations. (BGE, 251) But only a nation at least as powerful and strong as the Jews themselves, namely the English, can achieve that. The Germans are not yet strong enough for that task. (BGE, 251)

Still, Nietzsche wouldn't prefer either Jews or the English to be the model for the future Europeans. The Jews belong to the past, to the great metaphysical tradition that is magnificent but is coming to an end. (BGE, 250) The English are representative of the modern industrious and mediocre diligence, which lacks "real power of spirituality" and more importantly, "music."<sup>17</sup> (BGE, 252) The English represents the best of "herd morality" and "modern ideas," but is still not noble, not philosophical enough. (BGE, 253)

It turns out, after finishing the eighth chapter, that Nietzsche doesn't provide a specific description of how the new type of soul for the future Europeans should look, but still we have a general idea of what it should avoid and what it should uphold. This prepares the climax in the ninth chapter in which Nietzsche tries to elaborate on the highest and noblest type of soul, which should serve as standards for all the inferior types. I think the following passage best captures the image of what Nietzsche thinks to

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<sup>17</sup> In TI, Nietzsche seems to hold that it is precisely because the English are strong that they are lack of spirituality. (TI, "Skirmishes of an untimely man," 14)



be the soul of “the good European,” and points to his final teaching on the highest type of the soul.

*“I could imagine a music whose rarest magic would consist in its no longer knowing anything of good and evil, only now and then some sailor nostalgia, some golden shadows and delicate weaknesses would pass over it – an art that from a great distance would behold, fleeing toward it, the colors of a setting moral world that had almost become unintelligible – and that would be hospitable and profound enough to receive such late fugitives. --” (BGE, 255)*

### **3.4 The Noble Man, the Hermit Philosopher, and the Philosophizing God**

The meaning of the last chapter of BGE is perhaps less clear than any other chapter. It consists of 40 aphorisms, all of which are intended to address the final problem of the book, “what is noble,” the culmination of Nietzsche’s reflections on the noblest type of soul that forms the core of the philosopher of the future. But the structure and connection of these series of aphorisms are less clear than in the preceding sections.<sup>18</sup> It almost seems as if he has randomly collected a bunch of comments on what the highest type of soul. In order to make better sense of this chapter, I want to argue that this chapter describes the highest type of soul from three different perspectives, that of the noble man, the hermit philosopher and the philosophizing god. They are actually the image of the same highest type of soul viewed from different angles. In this way, we

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<sup>18</sup> Van Tongeren argues that in order to answer the question of “what is noble,” Nietzsche takes two steps: “a history of the origin and development of nobility; a psychological and physiological characterization of it.” Van Tongeren, *Reinterpreting Modern Culture: An Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche’s Philosophy*, pp. 227

will have a better and more complete understanding of what the highest type of soul would look like in different circumstances and conditions.

The first type is the noble or the aristocratic man. This is how the highest type of soul would look like from outside in society and history. So if we understand the difference between exoteric and esoteric teachings as the difference of viewing from outside and viewing from inside (BGE, 30), this would be Nietzsche's exoteric teaching that is easier to grasp and fundamentally "moral," for it is a teaching about (masters' and slaves') morality and based on that, a teaching about the structure of both the society and the soul. It is also in accordance with the doctrine of the will to power, which Nietzsche takes to be his working hypothesis, his *interpretation* of the world. If the essence of the world and life is understood to be the will to power, namely that life "will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant – not from any morality or immorality but because it is living and because life simply is will to power," (BGE, 259) the *natural* way of living, "to translate man back into nature," would be to affirm the hierarchical or aristocratic society that is based fundamentally on "an order of rank and differences in value between man and man." (BGE, 257) Thus, it is also vital to discriminate in this kind of society who is higher on the social ladder and who is lower. Nietzsche uses the morality of masters and the morality of slaves to illustrate this distinction. The morality of the masters would be what the highest type of human beings looks like from the outside, particularly when they are the governing class in a

society or community. Since it is not always necessary for the highest type of human beings to associate with other people or rule in society, another incarnation of the highest type of soul would be the hermit philosopher, which I would describe later as the noble soul viewed from within.

The masters of the aristocratic society are fundamentally characterized by their strength of the soul instead of physical strength (BGE, 257). Their soul is full of power and is the strongest; they experience the will to power most fully and have to discharge the overflowing power in themselves. (BGE, 260) This is the fundamental reason for their behavior: they are men of the greatest will to power; as the will to power is a token of life, they are most alive and live the most. (BGE, 259)

This feeling of overflowing power is closely related to another essential characteristic of the noble soul, which is its "egoism." (BGE, 265) The noble man believes in his own superiority and therefore feels himself entitled to the privileges and rights in society. Even his duties he would view as a type of privilege, which he would not like to share with others. (BGE, 272) More importantly, he believes he himself, his whole existence and his way of living, is the end in itself, not a means. (BGE, 258) This is his reverence for himself, and it is also manifested in his reverence for his ancestors and tradition. (BGE, 260) Indeed, Nietzsche argues that the sign of nobility consists in the faith of the noble man in himself, "some fundamental certainty that a noble soul has about itself, something that cannot be sought, nor found, nor perhaps lost." (BGE, 287)

In another aphorism Nietzsche quotes Goethe: "Truly high respect one can have only for those who do not seek themselves." (BGE, 266) This fundamental certainty is apparently lacking in the intermediate types and in the German spirit we discuss above. This is how the noble soul should be and why it is able to rule others. This is a type of manly courage and confidence that leads to noble actions. (BGE, 209 293) The slave, on the contrary, is characterized by "a pessimistic suspicion about the whole condition of man." (BGE, 260)

Another important feature of the noble man is his truthfulness.<sup>19</sup> His powerfulness makes him undaunted by any sort of hardship or adversity so that he does not have to deceive himself or hide anything from himself. He is able to face the things as they are and conquer or get over them. (BGE, 260) Because he himself creates values and is the end in itself, he does not have to pretend or disguise.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, the slave is characterized by his dependence on the opinion of the master: thus he has every incentive to pretend to be something he is not and to lie in order to win others' good opinions, which is vanity. (BGE, 261) Indeed, Nietzsche even thinks that the education for the plebeian, people of lower origin, is actually a kind of deception, so that they

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<sup>19</sup> Burnham also recognizes that "rather than a property of a thought, truth is to be understood as a state of being or a mode of life." Burnham, *Reading Nietzsche: An Analysis of Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 65; See also, (GM, First Essay, 5)

<sup>20</sup> If we recognize this fundamental affinity between truthfulness and nobility, then Kirkland's argument that in BGE Nietzsche's main intention is to prompt a change of measure of politics from truthfulness to nobility would seem to miss the point: what Nietzsche detests is not "truthfulness" itself, but "truthfulness" in the sense of Platonism and Christianity. Paul E. Kirkland, "Nietzsche's Honest Masks: From Truth to Nobility 'Beyond Good and Evil'," pp. 582

could forget their origin and become nobler than they actually are. But still, this does not change the fact that their nature is lower and not noble; so the best one can do is to “train” and “discipline” them so that they can respect what is noble. (BGE, 263)

This is what Nietzsche thinks to be the chief features of the noble man when viewed from outside, particularly when he is in society. But Nietzsche also points out that although the noble man is characterized by an overflowing amount of power, he is vulnerable in the sense that he may be corrupted by what is lower and baser than him. (BGE, 258, 268, 276)

*“Which group of sensations is aroused, expresses itself, and issues commands in a soul most quickly, is decisive for the whole order of rank of its values and ultimately determines its table of goods. The values of a human being betray something of the structure of his soul and where it finds its conditions of life, its true need.” (BGE, 268)*

Thus, for the more rare and nobler type of soul, it is difficult to find the conditions and needs for such a type among the average or common people, who would always share similar conditions and needs. (BGE, 282) Therefore, “the ruination of the higher men, of the souls of a stranger type, is the rule.” (BGE, 269) In such dangerous conditions, many of the noble men with the highest type of soul choose not to live among other people, because “all community makes men – somehow, somewhere, sometime ‘common.’” (BGE, 284)<sup>21</sup> If the noble man chooses to be alone or remain in

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<sup>21</sup> In Z, Nietzsche also speaks of the danger that a man like Zarathustra would meet with in the crowds of men, and he thus appeals to them: “Flee, my friend, into your solitude! I see you dazed by the noise of the great men and stung all over by the stings of the little men.” (Z, “On the flies of the market place”)

solitude, he would exist as the hermit philosopher. Under such condition, the complexity and profundity in the highest type of soul are more clearly manifested than if he is among other people. So here we can have an internal perspective on the highest type of soul, since Nietzsche tries to penetrate into the depth of it.

The first thing that characterizes the noble soul, when viewed from within, is surprisingly the suffering that it endures. (BGE, 270, 271, 290) Nietzsche does not discuss in detail where exactly the sufferings of the noble soul come from, but we may speculate based on the text. The first possibility is that the essence of the will to power involves profound suffering, even in the enjoyment of the increase of sense of power. Just as has been pointed out in the above analysis, the will to power always involves conflicts, tensions and contradictory forces, and the process of suppression, exploitation and transformation is inevitably very painful. Nietzsche also argues that the initial development of noble virtues is invariably under “unfavorable conditions” that one has to be always prepared for arduous fight and constant danger. (BGE, 262) Therefore, even if there is no such outer adversity, the soul of the noble people, as the embodiment of the will to power, contains from the outset tensions that would give rise to tremendous suffering. Another possible source of suffering may be the baseness and senselessness of the human world. For example, the psychologist would feel pain when he observes the ruination of higher men, which is fairly common in the human world. (BGE, 269) The saint would experience what is “human, all too human” as a kind of dirt, which his

sense of cleanliness would abhor and promote him to turn away. (BGE, 271) Also, there is the problem of waiting: the waiting for the right time of action almost always comes too late for the higher men and he thus must give up in vain. (BGE, 274, 277) The happiness of human beings also seems not profound enough for them. (BGE, 279) The third possibility is that he suffers from himself, the uncertainty and self-doubt he has for himself. Since Nietzsche thinks that there is no predetermined, fixed nature of human beings, that any order in the soul must come from the creative act of the will to power, it is possible to assume that the highest type of soul, who is the most truthful being, has to constantly face *directly* this internal chaos or abyss both in the soul and in the world, which is the terrible truth of nature. Unlike the average, well-order people who can dwell safely and happily under the illusion created by philosophy or religion, the highest type of person is precisely distinguished by his ability to live and thrive without such illusion or more precisely, with the awareness that he is under illusion. That knowledge of the impossibility of self-knowledge would thus occasionally give rise to profound self-doubt. (BGE, 281)

Thus, viewed from inside, the highest type of soul actually bears much resemblance to the intermediate type of soul. Its scientific spirit, its objectivity, its critical thinking and its profound self-doubt are all features of the scientific man. But the difference between them is also most profound. The intermediate type is content with his state of the soul; his limited strength of will to power does not strive to rise higher.

He devotes his power to the perfection of a specialty or a specific value system, instead of exploring a vision of the whole: the soul and the world. In other words, he remains passively with the chaos of his soul, or he stays with a static vision in the soul. In either way, he is still slave to powers alien to himself, to his own virtues.

On the other hand, the highest type of soul would become a hermit philosopher. To be hermit does not mean to live absolutely alone, severing all contacts with other human beings, for the hermit philosopher still has to observe and study the average human beings. (BGE, 218) To be a hermit means to always conceal something of oneself that is most profound, subtle, and unspeakable. This concealment or disguise requires the constant production of different masks. These masks would serve different purposes. First, it would protect others who are inferior to him from the profound sufferings he experiences. (BGE, 270, 290) It is out of a kind of "pity" for the average man. (BGE, 290) Moreover, this mask would serve as a veil that covers the chaos and abyss of the truth and provide a "perspective" so that people without strong will to power can live in peace and order:

*"Man, a manifold, mendacious, artificial, and opaque animal, uncanny to the other animals less because of his strength than because of his cunning and shrewdness, has invented the good conscience to enjoy his soul for once as simple; and the whole of morality is a long undismayed forgery which alone makes it at all possible to enjoy the sight of the soul. From this point of view much more may belong in the concept of "art" than is generally believed." (BGE, 291)*

This is also why the highest type of soul viewed from outside would be the noble man who is most certain and confident in himself, for he uses different masks to appear



in different images that are suitable for different purposes. The others would have to derive their own values and standards from these images and masks, and for them, these are not masks but “truth” because they do not have a rich, vibrant and profound spirit that they have to hide. (BGE, 288) It is in this sense that the philosopher creates values and is himself beyond good and evil.

The masks are not merely for other people to look at. They are also the game and the life style of the philosopher. The masks simultaneously reveal and conceal something about their spirit that may tempt or lure other similarly noble spirit to come join in his journey. Every fabrication of a mask is both a going away and coming to oneself. In this way he penetrates into the deepest abyss of the world as will to power and prepares ever more richer, subtler and grand masks. (BGE, 278)<sup>22</sup> In going under (*Untergehen*) his soul also rises to the highest heights where he can look through every mask by looking down.<sup>23</sup> He obtains the free vision. (BGE, 286)

*“One of the subtlest means for keeping up the deception at least as long as possible and of successfully appearing more stupid than one is – which in ordinary life is often as desirable as an umbrella – is called enthusiasm, if we include what belongs with it; for example, virtue. For Galiani, who should know, says: vertu est enthousiasme.” (BGE, 288)*

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<sup>22</sup> Burnham also argues that masks are also “tools of investigation, ways of identifying issues, of working through or solving sub-problems, discourses that must be understood in order to be inhabited ironically.” Douglas Burnham, *Reading Nietzsche: An Analysis of Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 207

<sup>23</sup> Similarly in Z, Nietzsche talks about how elevation of the soul is related to “looking down:” “You look up when you feel the need for elevation. And I look down because I am elevated. Who among you can laugh and be elevated at the same time? Whoever climbs the highest mountains laughs at all tragic plays and tragic seriousness.” (Z, “On reading and writing”)

*“In the writings of a hermit one always also hears something of the echo of the desolate regions, something of the widespread tones and the furtive look of solitude; in his strongest words, even in his cry, there still vibrates a new and dangerous kind of silence – of burying something in silence.” (BGE, 289)*

Thus, the hermit philosopher lives in this ultimate tension and harmony between silence and speech. His soul attains such greatness and depth that he almost feels himself to be one with the entire universe or nature, like “the desolate regions.” In his will to power he utters words, thus creating masks or caves in which man can dwell; but the resounding echo of these words constantly reminds him of the invisible yet ever present abyss or realm that is eternal, or, “true.” The hermit philosopher thus lives in this constant conflict or struggle between truth (silence) and life (speech), which is the ultimate manifestation of his will to power, and the highest, most spiritual will to power.

*“Every philosophy is a foreground philosophy – that is a hermit’s judgment... Every philosophy also conceals a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word also a mask.” (BGE, 289)*

*“A philosopher – is a human being who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, and dreams extraordinary things; who is struck by his own thoughts as from outside, as from above and below, as by his type of experiences and lightning bolts; who is perhaps himself a storm pregnant with new lightnings; a fatal human being around whom there are constant rumblings and growlings, crevices, and uncanny doings. A philosopher – alas, a being that often runs away from itself, often is afraid of itself – but too inquisitive not to ‘come to’ again – always back to himself.” (BGE, 292)*

Therefore for Nietzsche, words are only a small part of a philosophy.<sup>24</sup> What is kept unsaid constitutes the greater part.<sup>25</sup> Both the silence and the speech are meant to conceal *and* reveal the nature of the philosopher, who is the best proximity we could have to nature, to the truth.<sup>26</sup> It is in him that nature's soul and spirit is embodied, in its prodigious and vivid will to power. ("lightning bolts," "rumblings and growlings" etc.) The average type of the soul pays attention only to the words, namely the surface and mask, losing the opportunity to approach truth and hence living only under illusion. Those of higher nature are more apt to be tempted to explore and imitate the life of the philosopher. Profound suffering is the price, but freedom and richness of the spirit as well as the art of commanding and legislating are the reward. Just as Nietzsche points out in GM, the "objectivity of intellect" in the future is not "contemplation without interest," but "as the ability to control one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the

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<sup>24</sup> Tracy Strong also argues that Nietzsche is unwilling to "separate a man from what he does." Tracy Strong, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, pp. 117

<sup>25</sup> Perhaps this is also the reason why Nietzsche uses the aphoristic style of writing, which "forces the reader to fill in what is left unsaid and thereby to think along with the philosophical writer." Paul Franco, *Nietzsche's Enlightenment: The Free-Spirit Trilogy of the Middle Period*, pp. 14

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Rosen argues that Nietzsche puts great emphasis on rhetoric due to the awareness of "the impossibility of ontology," which replaces philosophy with poetry and ultimately ensures the triumph of nihilism. I think the distinction he makes between Plato and Nietzsche, namely that the former retains the tension of poetry and philosophy and the latter eliminates it in favor of poetry, is exaggerated. This conclusion does not take into account the possibility I'm considering here, namely truth is understood concretely as the philosopher himself and philosophy is the philosopher's creative will to power in accordance with truth and nature. See, Stanley Rosen, "Remarks on Nietzsche's 'Platonism'," *The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry*, pp. 187, 190

service of knowledge." (GM, "Third Essay," 12) Moreover, the life of the philosopher would resemble "nature" or "truth" in that it would always be a constant becoming: Nietzsche denies that there would be a final teaching for a true philosopher. Philosophy involves constantly digging questioning, destroying and recreating. But all these works are not in vain; they are presupposed by the most noble and natural way of living.<sup>27</sup>

The role or activity of the hermit philosopher I have just described resembles very much that of the genius of heart that Nietzsche elaborates most beautifully at the beginning of the penultimate aphorism. First, the genius of heart is "the tempter god and born piper of consciences." (BGE, 295) His words and behavior are all enticement so that others would be lured to be his followers. Second, he uses masks to help him achieve his purpose; he has "the knowledge of how to seem." (BGE, 295) Third, he makes those who follow him and come closer to him more richer, "richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open, blown at and sounded out by a thawing wind, perhaps more unsure, tenderer, more fragile, more broken, but full of hopes that as yet have no name, full of new will and currents, full of new dissatisfaction and undertows." (BGE, 295) In other words, he enriches and liberates the spirit he touches so that it can rise and rise to the highest possible heights.

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<sup>27</sup> Dalton points out that "the development nature of all being, as well as the projective nature of human understanding, determine that the future must remain indeterminate." Stuart Dalton, "Beginnings and Endings in Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," pp. 62

This genius of heart is the god Dionysus. He is also a philosopher. (BGE, 295)

Like the Greeks, Nietzsche makes gods as an ideal version of human being, who stands higher and is more powerful, which is unlike Christianity that makes God the antithesis of human beings and hence “perfect” in a human, all too human sense. Man stands in “enormous abundance of gratitude” instead of self-denying sense of guilty in front of such a god. (BGE, 49)

Thus the difference between Dionysus the genius of heart and the hermit philosopher, is not in *nature* but in *degree*. Dionysus uses masks much less.<sup>28</sup> He is less concerned with the protection of the inferior type of human beings who are not able to stand the more advanced and more terrible spirit, while the hermit philosopher sometimes still suffers from pity for the human beings, unwilling to witness that they suffer the same as he has. (BGE, 290) Dionysus wants to make man “stronger, more evil, and more profound; also more beautiful.” (BGE, 295) Hence he uses masks only when he wants to entice and lure. He does not use masks out of a sense of shame – he does not use humanly virtues to cover his evil and cunning, for he does not care to be discovered to be beyond good and evil. (“But such a god has no use whatever for all such venerable junk and pomp. ‘Keep that,’ he would say, ‘for yourself and your likes and whoever else

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<sup>28</sup> Gillespie argues that for Nietzsche, the wisest man “does not seek the truth; he always seeks only Ariadne. Love of the mysterious surface rather than knowledge of abysmal depths leads wisdom to new heights, leads man to overcome himself but thus like Theseus to perish.” Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, pp. 231, But I think on the contrary, it is the will to the terrible truth that is against and overcomes the basic will of the spirit to deception and simplification. (BGE, 230)

has need of it! I – have no reason for covering my nakedness.” BGE, 295) Just as Tracy Strong describes him, “Dionysus calls not for argumentation, as might a dialectician, not for inner light, as does an evangelist, but for creation, the building of a world in which the aphorism will not present itself as a problem.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, on the order of rank of philosophers, Dionysus the genius of heart would certainly stand the highest for he is the most cheerful and best sufferer/bearer of the truth.<sup>30</sup> His golden laughter marks the highest possible affirmation of the world and oneself, and the greatest exuberance of will to power. (BGE, 294)

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<sup>29</sup> Tracy Strong, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, pp. 134

<sup>30</sup> This cheerfulness, Nietzsche says, “is a reward: the reward of a long, brave, industrious, and subterranean seriousness.” (GM, Preface, 7)

## 4. Conclusion: Friendship and the Marriage of Dark and Light

BGE ends in the aftersong entitled "From high mountains." It is in the first place a song calling for friends. This should come as no surprise for us since we have argued that the hermit philosopher and the philosophizing god like to tempt and lure those who have the potentiality to become philosopher to join their dangerous, arduous yet most exciting journey to high spirituality. This is depicted as a party on the peak of a mountain: "Higher than mine no table has been set:/Who lives so near/The stars or dread abysses half as sheer?/My realm, like none, is almost infinite,/And my sweet honey – who has tasted it?" (BGE, Aftersong) Then the speaker starts to realize that he himself has changed so much that none of his old friends can recognize him. This implies that the journey of philosophy is in the last analysis the cultivation and transformation (or transfiguration) of one's soul and body. Philosophy is not essentially a system of dogmas or logical conclusions, but a way of living, a state of existence as a man living in nature.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, true philosopher is the one who is able to live in the least protection of lies and bogus solaces that are necessary for ordinary, weaker people: "I sought where cutting winds are at their worst?/ I learned to dwell/Where no one lives, in bleakest polar hell,/Unlearned mankind and god, prayer and curse?/Became a ghost that

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<sup>1</sup> In AC, Nietzsche also argues that what Christ wants to introduce, the true significance of the "glad tidings," is not "a new faith" but "a new way of life." But that message was most unfortunately distorted and inversed by the apostles of Christ. (AC, First Book, 33)

wanders over glaciers?" (BGE, Aftersong) The old friends of the speaker, "my ancient friends," might be the philosophers before Nietzsche, who with their "love and fear" are not able to endure these "fields of ice and rock:" "Here one must be a hunter, chamois-like." (BGE, Aftersong) The philosophers of the past, bound by their human, all too human instincts, are not able to rise to the heights that the speaker has now attained, the heights of beyond good and evil.

The following four stanzas continue to tell the story of friendship between the philosophers of the past and the philosopher of the future (the speaker). "Once you were young – now you are even younger." "Youth's longing misconceived inconstancy./Those whom I deemed/Changed to my kin, the friends of whom I dreamed,/Have aged and lost our old affinity:/One has to change to stay akin to me." The philosophers of the past, as Nietzsche points out, are characterized by their moral naivety. Now that Platonism has been gradually overcome with the advent of modern philosophy, one gets rid of this naivety and becomes mature. But Nietzsche does not think that modern philosophy should be the end of philosophy or the conclusion of philosophy's task: "Youth's longing misconceived inconstancy." The vehement attack by modern philosophy on the traditional philosophy is still a kind of youthful spiritedness. (BGE, 31) The modern philosophy has yet to appreciate the true merits and greatness of the ancient philosophy, for example, their naivety. Indeed, Nietzsche argues that when



one grows old, the toys of his childhood no longer appeal to him; but still the old man needs new toys, and he is indeed an eternal child. (BGE, 57)

Therefore, at the end of the aftersong, the speaker starts to applaud “noon of life” and “our second youthful state.” (BGE, Aftersong) Now that philosophy has attained self-knowledge, it embarks on a new journey of life. It has returned to its starting point where nothing is fixed or certain but still full of possibilities. “At noon it was that one turned into two.” The noon is an amazing middle point that divides the day into two, yet still maintains the unity of the two parts.<sup>2</sup> This reminds one of Nietzsche’s doctrine of will to power, which is intended to replace the traditional metaphysical assumption of the separate origins of opposite values. Indeed, the speaker finally announces: “Friend Zarathustra came, the guest of guests!/The world now laughs, rent are the drapes of fright,/The wedding is at hand of dark and light.” (BGE, Aftersong) The separation and hatred of good and evil, the error of Platonism, has been cured in the philosopher of Zarathustra, with a laugh. Only he can live with this great conflict and tension with the utmost elegance and joy.<sup>3</sup> But the journey of philosophy/philosopher of the future goes on and on, youth grows old and becomes young again, masks are fabricated, broken and come together again, as the eternal return of the same.

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<sup>2</sup> It also reminds us of Zarathustra’s ode to the Great Noon: “Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live.’ – Let this be our last will at the great noon!” (Z, “On the great longing”)

<sup>3</sup> Haar describes this as the “tragic joy,” which means “the inseparability of the above and the below, of truth and falsehood, of good and evil.” Michel Haar, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, pp. 152

This paper is intended to illuminate Nietzsche's conception of philosophy by demonstrating Nietzsche's philosophical journey in BGE. I hope I have shown that Nietzsche's concern with the truth is greater and more complicated than the post-modernist school has traditionally argued, in that he is trying to envision a highest and noblest type of soul and living style as the "truth." It is not enough, therefore, for a genuine philosopher only to "produce a coherent and livable picture of life" for oneself.<sup>4</sup> Also the traditionalist school overlooks Nietzsche's overcoming of the modern philosophy in his return to the "childishness" of previous philosophers after rejecting their dogmatism. In the last analysis, Nietzsche's philosopher, as the creator of values and indeed the entire order of any life world, is indeed the king or the legislator or the commander in the highest sense of the term. In the light of this understanding, we may finally answer the accusation that the mature Nietzsche is radically anti-political<sup>5</sup>: for Nietzsche, the problem of culture and the problem of politics are both only different dimensions of the problem of morality and philosophy, the problem of the order in the soul and in society. The philosophy/philosopher of the future indeed acquires new life or "baptized" in the highest sense. (BGE, 212)

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<sup>4</sup> Nehamas, "Who is the Philosopher of the Future?" in *Reading Nietzsche*, pp. 63

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Paul Franco, *Nietzsche's Enlightenment: The Free-Spirit Trilogy of the Middle Period*, pp. 227

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